

**LIBERTY, EQUALITY, AND KINDNESS?: HOW THE STRATEGIC CHOICE OF
VALUES AFFECT POLICY ATTITUDES AND INFORMATION CHOICES**

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Why did the healthcare reform plan, the central issue of President Obama's first four years – become so unpopular among members of the mass public in the U.S.? The answer may lie in the way the issue was framed by leaders of the parties in their communications with the public. Frames have been shown to significantly affect the opinions of subjects in the experimental lab (i.e. Chong and Druckman 2007a, b; Druckman 2010, 2011). However, fewer studies have attempted to document and test the causes behind these frame opinion changes. My dissertation focuses on answering how political policy issues can evolve from popular mandates to political time bombs when they are framed using values that are less convincing to the public. I show that frame strategy mistakes not only affect short-term evaluations of policies, but also the kind of news that one selects about that issue. This creates a feedback loop, in which strong frames create stronger connections to news that emphasizes the same message, and eventually may change the nature of an entire policy debate. In the case of policies like healthcare that involve social spending programs, I show that Democrats fail to frame successfully when they emphasize humanitarian values (defined as needs-based care for others). Using MTurk experiments with over 1900 subjects, I show that these humanitarian appeals are significantly less motivating to individuals – even those who rate high on humanitarian values – than appeals emphasizing egalitarianism or individualism. These differences are even more pronounced among those who are not strong partisans, and can result in significant changes in both policy attitudes and news choices. I conclude that Democrats would have garnered far more support had they used rhetoric

emphasizing egalitarian, or equality-inducing themes, in selling healthcare reform to the American public.

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PREFACE

This dissertation was inspired by the time I spent working in and getting to know politics in Northeastern Ohio; specifically, I questioned why the Democrats I knew in that particular part of the American rust belt were so much better at explaining why to support liberal programs than national party. “It’s about fairness,” was a common refrain. I wondered whether the death of Labor, and therefore of this old-Labor-style emphasis on fairness in the rest of the country was one reason that, as Thomas Frank put it, there was something “...*the Matter with Kansas*,” (Frank 2004) and perhaps the rest of the country. That is, if individuals were unable to see why spending programs *fit* with strong American values, they seemed likely to listen far more to the Republican message that these spending programs at best promoted laziness, and at worst created what Rush Limbaugh called, “a nation of slaves,” (Limbaugh 2001). The conventional explanation was that humanitarianism bridged the gap between support for spending programs and the fear that government may be getting too large – that is, American support and kindness for others based on means testing explained why some spending programs enjoyed broad support. However, I did not believe that this was the entire explanation. Why would kindness for others be a key part of the American ethos? I also suspected there was something specific about the *values* emphasized in specific stories that made frames strong or weak – above and beyond the source of the information or the subject of emphasis. With that in mind, I set about

trying to determine how certain frames in communication provide a stronger or weaker argument for social programs. The Affordable Care Act debate of 2010 provided an especially ripe case to evaluate different arguments for and against social spending, though I hope to supplement these tests with investigations in other issue areas. I have been happy to see confirmation of my hunches - that equality and individual right arguments result in the strongest frames of all, and explain more of support or opposition to healthcare than humanitarian values – and look forward to continuing this research.

This research (and all of the classwork, reading, writing, and ‘rithmetic that led up to it) would not have been possible without the steadfast support of key people in my life. First, I wish to recognize the excellent guidance and advice I have received from my committee members – Jon Hurwitz, Kris Kanthak, David Barker, and Kevin Arceneaux. All of them helped immensely with key suggestions, brainstorming, and comments along the way, and all errors that remain are my own. Jon showed particular patience with my late-night research dilemmas, two-hour brainstorming sessions, and constant diagramming (and re-diagramming) of the experimental treatments. I have been so lucky to have him as a professor and collaborator and wish all students could have the supportive dissertation chair and great committee that I had along the way.

I owe appreciation to all of the teachers that stoked my interest in political science and taught me how to be a scholar, especially the great faculty of Pitt Political Science, Karl Kaltenthaler, Dan Coffey, John Green, Rick Farmer, and Dave Cohen of the University of Akron, and Mr. Fry of Revere High 3rd period social studies for putting up with my political arguments in class. I also wish to thank two incredible Pitt assets and the people behind them that helped me along the way – the Pitt Writing Center and the Political Science Political

Behavior Discussion Group. Without these resources, getting stuck on a problem or paragraph would have been a far more intractable situation.

Hearty thanks are due, too, to the incomparable friends I made along the way and those whose friendships strengthened with time, especially to Gina Mungo, who made me remember to have fun and that there was nothing a night out couldn't fix. The truest friends help you move - even if it is 2,591.8 miles away - and we will always have a map back to each other. And thanks go to the best trivia team in the Pitt Political Science Department, who made me remember there are other things to know outside of the dissertation.

Mostly importantly, perhaps no one worked as hard to help me along with all of my goals in life as my family and my spouse. The Drs. Hallam particularly encouraged me to push harder, go further, and supported my dreams unconditionally (often monetarily). The support of my parents, siblings, in-laws, and all of my extended family undoubtedly drove me so much farther in life than I could have gone on my own, and for that I thank them profusely. Last but always the most important to me, my husband has also offered unflagging support as I have pursued my goals. The week we met, I saw a *Cleveland Scene* horoscope that told me I was about to meet my “fate bait...a person or event that awakens our dormant willpower...” Throughout our years together, Brian has been every bit of that “fate bait” and more, believing in me, listening to me complain, sharing my joys, moving all over the country with me, and being such a cool person that I knew I had to work hard to keep up. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION: THE POLITICS OF VALUE FRAMING

During the 2008 Presidential campaign, healthcare reform emerged as a major campaign issue. Both campaigns presented major plans to overhaul the system to an electorate that believed (at a rate between 69 and 64 percent), that it was the responsibility of the federal government to ensure all Americans had healthcare (Gallup 2012). After winning the popular vote to office by a larger margin than many of its previous occupants (Campbell 2008), President Obama may reasonably have thought it wise to devote a significant measure of his political capital and time to a plan to overhaul and reform the healthcare system. However, a year after the Affordable Care Act passed the House of Representatives on March 21, 2010, support for the healthcare reform had become a political liability for many members of Congress, agreement that healthcare was a governmental responsibility had dipped below 50% (Gallup 2012), and support of the legislation became a significant part of the narrative about sizeable re-election losses Democrats experienced in the midterm elections (Busch 2010), including the defeat of seven members with more than 20 years of seniority in Congress (Dinan 2010). It also became a rallying cry for a new political organization - the Tea Party movement (Williamson, et al. 2011).

Like President Clinton experienced before him, President Obama had watched healthcare reform shift from a generally popular campaign issue for both himself and Senator McCain to a political time bomb. Today, after the hard-won passage of the bill and a favorable Supreme

Court decision, the majority of Americans still express support for the individual aspects of the healthcare law, yet 75% of them report opposition to the law itself (Langer 2012). Though many of these support differences fall along partisan lines, independents have especially moved away from the bill since 2009, even while maintaining high support for the actual individual aspects of the bill (Zengerle 2012a). Pundits, pollsters, and politicians on the Democratic side have lamented that Republicans have “won” the debate over health care reform, while supporters of the bill have lost ground over time (e.g. Carville and Greenberg 2012; Dionne 2012; Lakoff 2009; Whitesides 2012).

What had gone wrong for the Democrats? I propose that the images, rhetoric, and values that politicians used to explain and shape the concept of healthcare reform in people’s minds, or the healthcare frames, were key to this change in support. More specifically, I argue that the frames that Democrats used to drum up support for healthcare reform were significantly less motivating to the American public than the Republican frames against the reform.

A large body of current research into public opinion indicates that individuals change their opinions based on frames, or the way that speakers emphasize certain issues and values in their communications with the public (Chong and Druckman 2007a; Druckman 2011; Nelson and Oxley 1999b; Nelson, et al. 1997b). These shifts in public opinion can have significant policy consequences, as politicians seldom relish adopting a politically unpopular issue or stance (Burnstein 2003; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Stimson 2004). Elites can also try to move these opinions themselves through the frames in commercials (e.g. Goldsteen, et al. 2001), press releases, and other communications with the public (Callaghan and Schnell 2001; Groeling and Baum 2008; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). In the case of healthcare, success of these anti-reform messages have been well documented, and many point to such messages as a major cause of

President Clinton's failure to pass comprehensive healthcare in the 1990s (e.g. Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Goldstein, et al. 2001; Jacobs 2001; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000).

It is less clear *how* these and other policy messages have been successful and, more specifically, what proponents of reform can do to shore up their supporters on the left and even gain new adherents from the middle. In this project, I show that the Democrats failed to engender strong healthcare reform support in 2010, at least in part, because of the *values* that they chose to emphasize. Through a content analysis of more than 200 press releases from Congressional leaders, I show that the Democrats employed frames in their communications emphasizing humanitarianism, or empathy towards others (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a), rather than talking about the issues of egalitarianism and individualism – the core values in the American ethos (Lynch and Gollust 2010; McClosky and Zaller 1984c) . As I demonstrate through the use of a large-scale web experiment, humanitarianism is not a motivating frame in the way that egalitarianism and individualism are. In order to understand why this value is less motivating, it is important to understand the foundations of the values themselves, and their history in the American ethos.

1.0 CHAPTER ONE: SHARED VALUES OF THE AMERICAN ETHOS

From the founding of America, this has been a country characterized by competing belief systems. On one hand, the belief in the supreme goodness of democracy and its principles has resulted in strong preferences for equality between individuals (e.g. Elster 1988; McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Tocqueville 1990). And on the other hand, the widespread American trust in capitalism to provide good outcomes for individuals and society has led to support for *individualism*, in which an individual who is not inhibited by outside forces may expect to reap rewards in direct relation to one's abilities, persistence, and hard work (e.g. McClosky and Zaller 1984b). These value systems of democracy and capitalism have held sway over much of the American landscape for generations, influencing not only our personal lives, but also our political choices (Arieli 1966; Bellah, et al. 2008; Chong, et al. 1983; Lipset and Schneider 1979, 1983), and continue to be key organizing principles for nearly all of the policy debates of our times (e.g. McClosky and Zaller 1984c).

Over the years, various authors have referred to this dichotomous political value structure as one of achievement versus equality (Lipset and Schneider 1979), freedom versus equality (Rokeach 1973), and capitalism versus democracy (McClosky and Zaller 1984c). While it is beyond the scope of this project to resolve the conceptual differences between these methods of understanding American value cleavages, it is my contention that these are all, fundamentally,

ways to talk about the differential priorities of individualism and egalitarianism. As Alexis de Tocqueville argued in *Democracy in America* (1835), the belief in democratic principles requires the corresponding belief that men are inherently created equal, with the same inviolable rights. That is, if all individuals in a society are given equal votes to affect the society in which they live, one must believe that they are all capable of such decisions and deserving of its benefits equally. If they are not equally capable of these decisions, it is the responsibility of society to even out such differences, through education, social programs, and other interventions of the state (McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Tocqueville 1835: 279). As such, support for social spending programs and governmental intervention is often strongly associated with a preference for democratic values over those of capitalism (McClosky and Zaller 1984c). This resulting belief – that all individuals should have equal opportunities, if not equal outcomes in life, is defined more specifically as the value of *egalitarianism*, or the preference for equalizing differences between persons.

By contrast, the support for a free market capitalist system exerts an equally strong influence on the American value system, but results in far different value preferences. America's history is one in which the individual has traditionally been able to work his way up to the top through resilience, hard work, and the tendency of the free market system to reward those with desired products or services (McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Morone and Jacobs 2005). During the early years of the republic, this relatively novel free market system provided American businessmen, entrepreneurs, and even those in rural communities with newfound wealth, freedom, and social mobility unparalleled through most of the rest of the world. Many Americans – especially those benefiting from the prosperity of this new capitalist system – saw this to be evidence that hard work and character could, absent external controls and within a free

market, result in particularistic benefits for those willing to “bear responsibility for his own fate,” (McClosky and Zaller 1984c: 267).

McClosky and Zaller describe that Americans view Europeans as being weak, lethargic, and generally too dependent on the state to enjoy their kind of social mobility (268). This belief in the fair organizing and rewarding nature of the free market led naturally to the belief that government and society should do as little as possible to interfere in the expression of a relatively perfect capitalist system (McClosky and Zaller 1984b; Tocqueville 1990). As McClosky and Zaller (1984: 266) explain in their seminal book, *The American Ethos*, “few beliefs [in pre-industrial America] were more deeply entrenched in the political culture than the conviction that government ought to play a minimal role in the conduct of human affairs.” Support for capitalism, then, results in the belief that individuals will be rewarded for their work, and that they are deserving of these rewards only in proportion to their work ethics and abilities. The amalgamation of these beliefs falls generally under the heading of the value of *individualism*, or the prioritizing of personal responsibility for one’s fate, rather than shared obligations.

In the tension between these two values lie the roots of most American political controversies, with liberals and conservatives lining up along the fault lines between individualism and egalitarianism. Liberals have stronger support for democratic values than conservatives, are generally optimistic about human behavior, and see inequalities between individuals as not being the fault of the person (McClosky and Zaller 1984b). As such, they tend to support social programs and governmental interventions to right inequalities and disadvantages as important to the future of American society, since these interventions help promote democratic inclusiveness. That is, liberals believe it is a failure of the system, rather than the individual, that causes inequality. They therefore seek reforms of the system.

Conservatives, by contrast, are generally pessimistic about human nature, and see people's economic fortunes as being inexorably linked to their own character attributes. In their support for a capitalist value system, conservatives see each getting only what they deserve, and see inequalities as a failure of personal responsibility. Because they believe inequalities are simply part of this capitalist system rewarding its best members, conservatives are wary of changes to the structure of society or its institutions, which they argue functions best with the fewest controls on the market (McClosky and Zaller 1984b: 203). While not antagonistic to democratic values, conservatives generally believe that people simply *are not* equal – instead, people get what they deserve in life, because outcomes are based on their work ethos. That is, the stratification of wealth, rewards, and comforts of a functional capitalist system fit with the conservative worldview that inequalities are normal outcomes of different values.

As such, conservatives favor the smallest possible government, so as to get out of the way of the free market system and allow individuals to make their own fates. This results in strong support for *laissez-faire* capitalism and self-reliance, as well as the rejection of the welfare state (Free and Cantril 1968; McClosky and Zaller 1984b). Such opposition to a welfare state and commitment to individualism makes the U.S. unique among most developed nations (Mehrtens 2004; Schwartz 1992; Shapiro and Young 1989), and has resulted in some of the lowest spending programs and highest disparities between rich and poor among other democracies (OECD 2012).

In a netherworld between these values of individualism and egalitarianism lies *humanitarianism*, or the belief in needs-based help of others, for the sole purpose of helping those individuals out of immediate circumstances of poverty (e.g. Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a; Shen and Edwards 2005; Steenbergen 1996). Feldman argues throughout his work (e.g.

Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a; Feldman and Zaller 1992) that humanitarianism is the key factor to understand why Americans support welfare and other social policies, as they are willing to give support to others out of this pro-social motivation. This particular value relies heavily on empathy and perceived neediness of the recipient in order to be activated (Esping-Anderson 1990; Monroe 1996; Rushton, et al. 1981; Staub 1989).

Importantly, humanitarianism appears to have no direct link to blame attribution, at least not in the sense that individualists blame the individual and egalitarians blame the society (Monroe 1996; Rushton, et al. 1981; Staub 1989). In this way, humanitarianism seems to fit well with the finding that Americans remain philosophically conservative, but programmatically liberal (Abramowitz 2010b; Feldman and Zaller 1992; Free and Cantril 1968; Ladd 1985; McClosky and Zaller 1984c). McCloskey and Zaller (1984: 274) point out that, “Americans are, in short, willing to have society assist people who are in distress, but do not believe [the government] has a duty to provide assistance permanently.” People do want to help each other, but only rarely and only in cases of extreme poverty and need. Though humanitarians are concerned with personal responsibility like individualists, they believe that every person has an obligation to help his or her fellow being. For Christians, this precept may arise from the oft-quoted passage from Matthew 25:41, “Depart from me, you cursed...Zillman and Bryant 1985or I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink. I was a stranger, and you took me not in...” (King James Version 1999). By contrast, famous individualist William Graham Sumner wrote that, “A drunkard in the gutter is just where he ought to be, according to the fitness and tendency of things. Nature has set upon him the process of decline and dissolution by which she removes things which have survived their usefulness,” (Sumner 1913).

Humanitarianism is also not associated exclusively with one political ideology or another (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a; Monroe 1996). Testing by Feldman and colleagues (2001a; 1992) suggests that humanitarianism as a value does not conflict with either support for individualism or equality, leading them to declare it “an excellent candidate for bridging the gap between support for capitalism...and support for social welfare policies,” (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a: 660). Indeed, it does seem that humanitarian concern for others should be a strong motivator for American beliefs towards social spending, since it appeals to both Democrats and Republicans, does not require one to assign blame for poverty, and fits well with both key values in the American ethos – equality and individualism.

This may be one of the reasons that, as I argue in Chapter 2, elites in the Democratic Party have increasingly used humanitarian value cues in their rhetoric regarding programs like healthcare in recent years – humanitarianism seems to appeal to all comers in American society. Republicans, too, have used humanitarian rhetoric; “compassionate conservatism,” a major theme for George W. Bush throughout his campaign and subsequent presidency, describes support of means-based help for others but *not* for programs aimed towards equalizing differences between rich and poor in the long term (Kuypers, et al. 2003; Sullivan 2012). Gov. Mike Huckabee, for example, while running for president in 2008 as a self-proclaimed compassionate conservative, defended his support for a tuition assistance program for children of illegal immigrants saying, “you don’t punish the child because the parent committed a crime” (in Sullivan 2012).

Today’s Republican Party appears to be placing far more emphasis on individualist values, however. As Jim Wallis lamented in his 2011 opinion article (Wallis 2011), “The Disappearance of the Compassionate Conservative,” the rising stars of the Republican party have

made bold criticisms of compassion in recent years. In the Republican presidential primary races, all one-time frontrunners seemed to explicitly reject compassion in their campaign messages. For example, Newt Gingrich claimed poor children had never been around anyone with a job, Michelle Bachmann repeatedly criticized Gingrich for daring to support a "humane" immigration policy, and Herman Cain blamed Depression-level unemployment in America on people who just don't want jobs (Wallis 2011). It is perhaps quite telling that Mitt Romney selected the Ayn Rand enthusiast and Tea Party darling Paul Ryan as his Vice Presidential candidate. Paul Ryan himself has publicly stated that, "fight we are in here, make no mistake about it, is a fight of individualism versus collectivism," (in Dowd 2012). Republican elites seem to have abandoned humanitarianism as a primary value, and instead are focusing on individualist rhetoric. Given the choice between organizing behind the flag of humanitarianism and individualism, Republicans seem to be wholeheartedly lining up behind individualism, betting that it will be a better method for organizing supporters and reaching out to swing voters in 2012.

By contrast, Democrats appear to be committed to humanitarianism, shying away from the egalitarian language of their labor past. By all accounts, this should be a winning strategy for them – American voters seemed to be in a conservative mood in the last several elections, handing Congressional Democrats crushing losses in the 2010 midterm elections, and not showing the kind of populist anger characteristic of past-economic downturns (e.g. Campbell 2010; Frymer 2008). At the same time, the American labor movement (previously one of the strongest forces in the country working towards equality of income between the rich and poor) has been on a precipitous downturn for the last 20-30 years, leaving union causes open to attacks and relatively unprotected (Clawson and Clawson 1999).

If it is the case that Americans are on a swing towards conservatism, humanitarian rhetoric should work well for the Democrats, and should have proved successful in their framing of the 2010 healthcare debate. Indeed, Feldman and Steenbergen (2002: 667) argue that humanitarianism is a bridging value, bringing together the primary conflicts between egalitarianism and individualism. By this logic, we should expect that humanitarianism should appeal to the most people possible, and allow Democrats to gain key swing supporters to their policies and electoral coalitions.

However, a closer look hints that humanitarianism may not prove as motivating of a value as egalitarianism or individualism. In Feldman and Steenbergen's observational study of humanitarianism, the orientation is correlated with support for social spending, but not nearly as much as beliefs about government size or support for equality. This indicates that humanitarianism does not motivate action towards solving social problems or resolving long term inequalities. Humanitarianism may actually be a weaker motivating value. Why? I argue that egalitarianism and individualism function as organizing values and shape the way people think about the world. They help individuals organize many kinds of information and explain why some people are poor and what to do about it. Thus, we see in Feldman and Steenbergen (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a) that support for egalitarianism is strongly correlated with support for social programs that help right the inequalities in society. Egalitarianism and individualism require no motivation based on need or empathy, and instead are based on core American values about the ideal societal structure, role of government, and human nature (e.g. Chong, et al. 1983; Markus 2001; McClosky and Zaller 1984c).

Humanitarianism contrasts with egalitarianism and individualism, in that it is motivated primarily by empathy for others (Esping-Anderson 1990; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a;

Monroe 1996; Schwartz 1975). That is, humanitarianism is not a way of organizing information and beliefs about the way the world should be, but is instead an immediate and short-term reaction to the suffering of others. As such, humanitarians may be expected to support programs designed to alleviate short-term poverty, help those judged as deserving such as widows, mothers, and children (Skocpol 1995), and provide support for other such programs that can motivate reasoning for short-term help of others. This is an important distinction, because the maintenance of high levels of empathy in order to motivate humanitarian behavior towards others requires both implicit behaviors such as emotion-sharing, and explicit neural processing such as adopting the perspective of others and self-regulating one's emotional response to the pain of others (Decety 2005). The level of empathy felt towards another person can and has been manipulated in the experimental setting (e.g. Batson 2002; Batson, et al. 2002), but the long term potential of empathetic appeals is understudied in the social psychological literature. Indeed, the process of passing a bill in Congress or debating a policy in the public can take months, if not years, especially if that bill is highly contested (Box-Steffensmeier, et al. 1997).

Research into social spending support shows that empathies that are salient in the American public are likely to be those that are pre-existing, strongly-held previous cultural norms – most consistently, care directed towards the “deserving” such as elderly and children and those generally believed not to be responsible for their own poverty (Appelbaum, et al. 2006; Applebaum 2001). Appeals for humanitarian, or need-based help, to those outside of these groups, especially to welfare recipients, often activate racial stereotypes instead of empathy towards the targeted beneficiary. As Gilens (2000) shows in his book, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, white Americans often think that the majority of social spending recipients are black, and in turn, often use centuries-old stereotypes about blacks as being lazy or prone to abuse of

the system to subconsciously justify their distaste for social welfare spending. Indeed, Gilens demonstrates through observational research that the same people who state that welfare should be ended also report support for more spending on the “deserving” poor, indicating that among some Americans, *deservingness* and *empathy* towards recipients are key moderators of social spending support. Consistent with Gilens’ findings, experimental research in the social psychology field has shown that opinions about social welfare policies are highly susceptible to manipulation of empathy, through subtle (and not-so-subtle) invocation of negative stereotypes of aid recipients (Johnson, et al. 2009).

Many authors argue that the fundamental conflict of American politics is characterized by this push and pull between these core values, leaving Americans with both a desire to help others, and one for limited government (e.g. Dionne 2012; Lipset and Schneider 1979; McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Rokeach 1973; Stone 2005). The consequences of this push and pull are clear in the history of healthcare, which remains one of the most unequally distributed resources in America (Jacobs 2005)¹. Despite living in one of the richest countries in the world, nearly 43 million Americans have no health insurance, and another 30 million do not have enough to cover a serious illness (Kawachi 2005). Even though "an enlightened self love continually leads Zengerle 2012a to help each other," (Tocqueville 1835), this community spirit has not led the majority to support the resolution of these inequalities.

¹ Other social issues fall along similar lines - for example, Price, Nir, and Cappella (2005) show experimentally that the issue of gay marriage can be framed in terms of individualism and egalitarianism, with the message of equality significantly increasing subjects' support. Other issues have experienced less success employing messages of egalitarianism, such as the failed Equal Rights Amendment (Mansbridge 1986), or have gained support only slowly over time, such as the Civil Rights Movement (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1992). For more about the history of these values in major policy debates throughout American history, see, for example, McClosky and Zaller 1984c, and Dionne 2012.

This is not to say that there have not been major pushes to pass universal healthcare, of which the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 is an important outcome. Several American presidents, including Harry Truman, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama, have successfully won office after campaigning for universal healthcare, promising to assuage these inequalities (Morone and Jacobs 2005). However, each ran into strong public opinion against these reforms, even among supporters. While people may support presidential candidates for a variety of reasons, it is clear from evidence of opinion polling during Clinton and Obama's reform efforts that opinion turned from the majority supporting healthcare reform to a majority opposing such policy changes (Gallup 2012; Goldstein, et al. 2001e.g.).

Why did these opinion changes take place? In the next chapter, I argue that these changes were due to problems in the way that supporters framed the debate. That is, supporters used themes in their communication about healthcare reform that were less convincing than its detractors' themes. *By using humanitarian language in their party communications about the bill, Democrats failed to activate underlying strong belief structures about the way the world should be organized.* Instead, they relied on sustained empathy for others to carry supporters through the bill passage. After its passage, they suffered sustained losses and popularity of the bill plummeted, even as its key provisions enjoyed high levels of support. Even if elites are able to pass major bills like the Patient Protection and Health Care Affordability Act, maintenance of such social policies requires sustained political good will (e.g. Brown 1982), and such good will is extremely difficult to sustain. Put differently, humanitarianism is, I will argue, a more fragile value, and any attempt to frame values in humanitarian terms is likely to fade in persuasiveness over time.

Ultimately, I will demonstrate the relative fragility of humanitarianism, and describe a detailed scenario of why proponents of the Affordable Care Act were fighting an uphill battle in their effort to maintain support over the long-term. In order to understand what makes a frame in communication more powerful than another, I next define frames and explain how they work, and show how political elites used the American values of humanitarianism, egalitarianism, and individualism in their communications about healthcare reform in 2010. I then go on to offer a theory of how frames interact with values and partisan identification to become more or less convincing among groups of individuals. This helps create a typology of strong frames and a theoretical foundation for understanding why certain issues become political kryptonite.

1.1 TESTING THE EFFECTS OF VALUES IN ELITE FRAMING

1.1.1 The Plan of the Study

Chapter 2 will explore current framing research, establishing how the core values outlined in Chapter 1 have been shown to affect political opinion in both the experimental lab and in the actual political arena. While we know a great deal about the details of various frames (i.e. Druckman 2001a; Druckman and Nelson 2003), we still do not know how frames actually *work* within individuals to move opinion on issues and thus change political discourse. Here, I introduce the foundation of my argument to address this uncertainty – that a frame’s link to *values* is key to understanding why certain frames have cache in political discourse, while others do not. The use of values that are core to the American ethos increases the accessibility of

constructs that organize the way people think about the issue at hand (Higgins 1996; Shen and Edwards 2005; Wyer 2003).

Elites affect the agenda of American politics by framing the issues of the policies when they want to convince the public to support or oppose an issue (e.g. Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). Their attempts at issue framing can have such a pervasive influence, due in part to the time constraints and constant need for more news in the media (e.g. Krosnick and Miller 1996; Baum and Groeling 2008; Chong and Druckman 2007b; Stroud 2012). To understand how this takes place and the types of frames used, I introduce a content analysis of framing attempts by Congressional leaders in the 2010 healthcare reform debate. This content analysis shows that the key value frame employed by the Democrats in the debate was humanitarianism, while Republicans focused on individualism. In the next chapter, I outline a theory of why these frame types mattered to whether the Democrats were successful in selling their preferred policy outcome to the American public.

Chapter 3 next outlines a theory of strategic value framing and the specific hypotheses of this project. Research into what makes a frame “strong” shows that such convincing frames elicit robust reactions by tapping into shared values and using common themes; additionally, they employ expert opinions (e.g. Druckman 2001a, c; Druckman and Nelson 2003). I argue that frames about policy changes like healthcare are only strong to the degree that they tap into resilient shared values, especially equality and individualism, that are key to the American ethos (e.g. McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Tocqueville 1990).

We can understand people as falling into value categories, such that they see the world and newly proposed policies in terms of these values. For present purposes, individuals can adopt

egalitarian, humanitarianism, and individualism as prisms through which they understand politics. As established in chapter 1, these values are an integral part of one's attitudes and their perceptions of new information. When these values are powerful motivators, appeals to these individuals using other values should do little or nothing to their existing beliefs and attitudes. That is, if one holds a belief in egalitarianism, a strong value, then individualist appeals should have little effect on their attitudes and information preferences. They should remain strong supporters of healthcare reform and continue to seek out egalitarian information when it is offered. However, when a value is a weak motivator (in the case of humanitarianism), other, stronger appeals like egalitarianism and individualism should be able to move these subjects to support or oppose healthcare, especially when the subject has less partisan ties. Chapter 4 tests these propositions using more than 1000 subjects and two issue areas – healthcare and affirmative action. I will demonstrate that these value types exist among individuals and that they are the key factor in understanding the direction and strength of opinion towards the issues of healthcare and affirmative action.

One of the strongest variables in understanding how and why an individual holds a political opinion has traditionally been partisan identification (e.g. Abramowitz and Saunders 2005, 2006, but see Fiorina and Abrams 2010; Fiorina, et al. 2005). It is not surprising, therefore, that support for healthcare falls – like other social spending issues – neatly along partisan lines. However, I argue that values have an interactive but separate importance when trying to understand one's political beliefs (e.g. Goren 2005), especially for those who are politically unaffiliated or only weakly affiliated. That is, Independents and “leaners” who are politically up-for-grabs base their support on values, rather than party affiliation. In Chapter 5, I show that with both healthcare and affirmative action the value of egalitarianism is particularly

convincing for Democrats and those who are unaffiliated or only weakly affiliated with a party. Importantly, those who were unaffiliated or weakly affiliated were the group that were most affected by egalitarian and individualist appeals, selecting that kind of value information as well as moving their attitude towards the direction of the frame. I show how the use of egalitarian frames would have resulted in specific numbers of independent and weak partisan supporters for the Democrats, through the use of predicted probability models, and extrapolate these results to political consequences. Conversely, I also show that independents/leaners were not affected by humanitarian appeals—at least not in the sense that would enable proponents of health care to attract their support with humanitarian-based appeals.

Chapter 6 explores this argument of directed value framing from a different angle, showing that stronger frames employing core values not only result in attitudinal shifts towards or against key social policy issues, but also that they affect the kind of further news information that an individual seeks about that issue. I show the results of the MTurk experiments, showing that egalitarians and individualists largely preferred their “own” information, even in the face of competing value frames, but that humanitarians gravitated towards selecting more of whatever information the frame they had received had emphasized, unless it was humanitarian information. This chapter discusses how this kind of information preference based on strong value frames can create feedback loops, such that individuals receive only the information they prefer and have decided to agree with as the frame of an issue. For example, individualists receiving an individualist frame were significantly more likely than other individualists to select *more* individualist information, selecting a magazine cover that read, “Healthcare Reform: What

will it do to promote personal responsibility?²” Over time, and even in the relatively short time span of the experimental setting, this information selection can either show stronger value alignment when the information matches one’s preexisting beliefs, or weaken their commitment to their values when the information does not. This can have serious implications for any party trying to sell an issue to the American public.

Lastly, Chapter 7 will conclude with a review and discussion of the importance of these findings and recommendations for future research. I find that egalitarians are largely unmoved by appeals employing individualism and humanitarianism, and individuals conversely move little in the face of egalitarian or humanitarian appeals. However humanitarians move greatly and significantly when they read an appeal to their sense of fairness or liberty – that is, an egalitarian or individualist appeal. I argue that this due to the fact that humanitarian values are simply not as motivating – this may be because humanitarians rely on empathy for motivation (de Waal 2008; Decety 2005), which can be easily diminished by reference to stereotypes about aid recipients (e.g. Batson, et al. 2002; Gilens 2000; Johnson, et al. 2009). I discuss the implication of these finding for the Democratic Party and for the outcome of policy battles more generally. In all, using “strong” frames, or those tied to core values, seems to result in not only attitude but also behavioral changes, creating a feedback loop of news preferences.

² Exact language and layout of the magazine covers can be found in Appendix C.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO: FRAMING THE DEBATE

Frames in communication promote specific definitions, constructions, and interpretations of political issues (Gamson 1992) to “provide meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987: 143). Although much ink has been spilled about political framing (e.g. Chong and Druckman 2007a; Druckman 2010, 2011; Schaffner and Sellers 2010), little is understood about how and why they work to change the emphasis from one aspect of an issue to another during a policy debate. Previous research has shown that, by being exposed to a frame emphasizing certain aspects of an issue, individuals can be swayed towards different opinions on a topic (e.g. Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2001). It has also revealed that individuals may use different considerations to reach the same outcome, given stories about the subject that emphasize distinctive aspects (e.g. Kinder and Sanders 1990, 1996; Nelson and Kinder 1996). The mechanism by which these considerations change is widely hypothesized to be the promotion of certain aspects of an issue to the forefront of an individual’s mind in the decision making process (i.e., to become more accessible). Additionally, frames work by changing the way information is perceived, as well as the possible addition of new information (Druckman 2001a; Nelson 2004; Nelson, et al. 1997a). In this chapter, I explain how current findings regarding political framing led to the questions of this study. Next, I place this question of how the Democrats made missteps in their 2010 “selling” of the Affordable Care Act in the context of

the current framing research, establishing the problem and showing the results of a content analysis.

2.1 ISSUES IN CURRENT FRAMING RESEARCH

Frames differ from arguments in that they employ sophisticated and consistent techniques to change the *way* in which a person thinks about an issue. Framing as examined here borrows its definition from Chong and Druckman 2007a (2007: 104): “framing is a process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue.” The authors further formalize their definition of framing as originating with the conventional expectancy value model of an individual’s attitude (e.g., Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Nelson, et al. 1997a), with the attitude defined as the weighted sum of all evaluative beliefs about an object, candidate, or policy. Thus, $Attitude = \sum v_i * w_i$ with v_i indicating the evaluation of the object, candidate, or policy on attribute i , and w_i signifying the salience weight given that attribute (Nelson, et al. 1997b). The attribute i then encompasses considerations (Zaller 1992), dimensions (Riker 1990), values (Sniderman, et al. 1993), and beliefs (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980)³.

³ I treat the effects and mechanisms of framing as considerably different from priming or the term encompassing both - *heresthetic* activation. Heresthetics do not challenge underlying beliefs of recipients or provide uniquely new information, but instead activate the salience of particular considerations already within the thoughts of the message recipient through making them both more accessible and more important (Barker, et al. 2002). Such heresthetic use however differs from pure framing in that it is a marriage of both priming (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Krosnick and Miller 1996; Zaller and Feldman 1992) - or bringing concepts to the top-of-the-head by manipulating accessibility alone - and emphasis framing - which manipulates consideration importance through many routes (Barker, et al. 2002; Druckman 2001a, b, c). Heresthetics modify the value of both w_i and v_i by making things more important to decision-making and more accessible, for example, by manipulating the order in which decisions are made (Riker 1986). There is considerable crossover of effects between framing and priming, and accessibility of concepts indeed seems a requisite for activating their importance (Fazio 1995a).

Communication and movement frames, or frames existing in the media and world external to the individual, are the naturally occurring versions of experimentally tested emphasis frames. In this way, the emphasis frames discussed herein are unique in stressing the relative *importance* of particular concepts to judging attitudes and beliefs towards an issue, candidate, policy, or idea rather than simply trying to change attitude *content* such as in typical information gathering of belief change (Nelson and Oxley 1999a). Emphasis framing then changes the value of w_i on the equation $\sum v_i * w_i$, modifying the salience rather than content of belief.

Despite the growing literature on frame effects, a common gap exists in a lack of frame strength measures. While we know a lot about what makes a particular frame display low effects on resulting beliefs, such as the inclusion of contrasting information, source credibility, knowledge, and strong existing beliefs (e.g. Brewer 2001; Druckman 2001c; Nelson, et al. 1997a; Nelson, et al. 1997b), we know less about what makes frames about a particular *issue* “stick” for a particular side of the issue. That is, why does an issue become more successfully framed by one side of the issue or another? Sniderman and Theriault (2004) study was, I argue, a first step at capturing this process. There, the authors measured pre-existing values, told respondents about welfare programs in a way that emphasized either the economic consequences to those paying for it or the altruistic aspects of the program, and then tested subjects’ support of the program. Thus, theirs was one of the first studies to examine whether frames had more powerful effects when they matched pre-existing beliefs.

However, they employed frames that lined up almost perfectly with ideological positions associated with the Republican and Democratic parties. I argue this matching test was an

incomplete test of the effects of values on frame strength because subjects with strong ideological predispositions were, in all likelihood, clearly able to tell which answer was the conservative position and which the liberal. Thus, I argue that their frame experiment did not capture actual effects of value attitudes on frame acceptance; rather, it measured the effects of *ideological identification* on the acceptance of frames.

Despite these criticisms, their findings deserve further investigation; experimental psychological research does confirm that information framed in ways that emphasize one's *existing* value beliefs result in a stronger adoption of the message (Clark, et al. 2008). For this reason, I propose that presenting respondents with news stories that emphasize several values that were employed in both Republican and Democratic rhetoric better simulates and tests real world conditions of framing.

Additionally, we know little to nothing about the effects of frames outside of their capture by a particular dependent variable. Even if they affect the outcome of an attitudinal decision right after exposure, does that mean that they have any further effect? I seek to test this proposition using a somewhat novel dependent variable in the framing literature – an information search (but see Nabi 2003). Research suggests that the kind and quality of information an individual seeks out is highly dependent on one's political predispositions and beliefs (Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009; Claassen and Highton 2009; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Lupia 1994). Cable broadcasting has increasingly allowed individuals to receive narrow messages that confirm their beliefs, rather than competing ideas (Barker 2002; Prior 2005; Stroud 2011). At the same time, nearly all framing research has assumed that frames are transmitted to the public via the news media (Druckman 2011), while ignoring the public's desire to seek out those frames themselves (but see Druckman, et al. 2012). That is, are people passively receiving more

consistent information after receiving a frame, or are they, as I argue, finding that they like what they hear and seeking out more of the same?

The second task then is to define a behavior and explain its interplay with, and effects on, attitudes. A behavior can encompass such things as political choices (Ajzen 2005), purchase of goods (Warshaw 1980), and signing a petition or protesting (Norris 1993). Fazio's foundational attitude accessibility theory posits that there are much higher correlations between attitude and behavior when those attitudes are accessible⁴. In a study of voters before the 1984 Presidential election, Fazio and Williams (1986) found that individuals whose attitudes were more accessible had an almost 80% correlation between attitudes toward the candidate and their later behavior of reported vote. For those with less accessible attitudes, correlation between attitude and behavior was only 44%. Mischel (1983) adds to this explanation of behavior the theory that situations modify the attitude behavior model. Individuals act in particular ways because they are attempting to make sense of the world and their attitudes together. Behaviors are situational, and subject to the individual's temporary weighting of considerations. As already established, frames work specifically by making issues more important and fundamentally more accessible. If the frame is strong, it is likely it will result in both attitude and behavioral effects among individuals.

The discovery and understanding of such a link between attitudes and behavior, namely through information searching, may help us explain whether frames are deleterious to

⁴ Two primary models inform a significant body of attitude-behavioral research - the theory of reasoned action (e.g. Ajzen and Fishbein 1980), and the attitude accessibility theory (Fazio 1986). Ajzen and Fishbein's model argues that behavioral intention is the only variable directly effecting behavior, with subjective norms and attitudes toward the behavior determining that intention. While still popular in marketing, this theory has been subject to several criticisms, including a need to add many moderating variables in order to explain such behaviors as habits (e.g. Kallgren and Beatty 1987) and its sometimes quite low predictive ability. More disconcerting perhaps are the serious statistical problems with the model, since it ignores main effects in the equation (see Evans 1991 for a complete discussion). More applicable here is the Fazio (1986) attitude accessibility model.

representation (elites are able to frame everything and manipulate the public), or transient outside of their capture in experimental settings or surveys and therefore not a significant threat to representation. If frames are effective only in creating attitudes “*on the spot*” (Van der Veld and Saris 2004), results should indicate little connection between the frame received and the kind of information sought out. And if frames, like priming, function by making an issue more accessible, they should not result in the kind of fixed weights of considerations (Zaller 1992, Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997) that would be visible if strongly held prior beliefs (i.e. Brewer 2001) translate to stronger framing effects. However, not all accessible considerations are weighted equally in respondents’ minds at all times (Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997). If frames are able to activate weights of some issues at the expense of others, framing (such as happens in mass media coverage of issues) (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, Entman 1993, Dorman and Livingston 1994) plays an important role in attitude and behavior formation. And if these issue weights have long-term or permanent effects, it is likely that framing shapes public opinion and debate far more than previously considered.

In the case of healthcare, Republicans seemed to successfully change the national discourse from one of equalizing healthcare differences or helping those in poor health to one of distaste for governmental intervention – an historically successful frame in America (Gilens 2000). In addition, it appears clear some aspects can make a frame stronger or weaker – that is, more or less able to persuade individuals (Chong and Druckman 2007a). However few studies have attempted to pinpoint the factors that make a frame more successful for elites during a policy debate, or to extrapolate the effects of frames to actual political or cognitive consequences. The debate surrounding the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

offers a unique opportunity to watch party elites choose which frames to emphasize in explaining their support or opposition to the bill, and forms the basis to attempt such extrapolation.

2.2 VALUES AND FRAMES IN THE 2010 HEALTHCARE DEBATE

Around the time of the 2008 Presidential election, almost 70% of Americans reported they believed that the federal government had a duty to provide all citizens healthcare - the highest level reported since the question had been asked, starting in the 1970s (Gallup 2012). In 2012, however, the vast majority of Americans appeared to reject the attempts of Obama's government to fulfill this function, with 75% opposing the Healthcare Reform Act of 2010 (Langer 2012) and 56% saying that the bill should be repealed (Rasmussen 2012). This opposition continues despite the fact that most Americans support the separate aspects of the bill, with 82% supporting a ban against insurance companies denying coverage for pre-existing conditions, 72% reporting support for employers with more than 50 workers having a requirement to provide insurance, and 61% saying children under 26 should be able to stay on their parents' insurance (Zengerle 2012b). Even the most unpopular aspect of the law, the individual mandate requirement to buy insurance, still has high support among at least 39% of Americans (Kaiser Family Foundation 2012b; Zengerle 2012a). Despite all of the support for individual aspects of the Affordable Care Act, over 51% of Americans reported in August, 2012 that they want to see the bill repealed, and only 38% on average stated they have a favorable view of the bill (Kaiser Family Foundation 2012a). *Why, if Americans support most of the bill, are they reporting such distaste for it as a whole?*

The answer may lie in the GOP elites' relative success in framing the debate about healthcare as anathema to individualist values, especially among Republicans and independents (e.g. Kaiser Family Foundation 2012b; Zengerle 2012a). Support or distaste for the bill falls clearly along partisan lines, with Republicans strongly against the bill, Democrats somewhat less enthusiastically in favor (including the 51% who wish the bill went further), and independents leaning against it overall (Kaiser Family Foundation 2012a; Zengerle 2012a). As Ipsos pollster Chris Johnson explained in the *Chicago Tribune* (Zengerle 2012a), "Republicans have won the argument with independents and that's really been the reason that we see the majority of the public opposing it." Indeed, Republicans seem to have been able to frame the debate about the health care bill as unconstitutional despite the Supreme Court upholding it, though the effects of the SCOTUS decision on popular support are still unclear⁵.

While Republicans used frames about healthcare that activated beliefs about individualism in the public, Democrats primarily employed the theme of egalitarianism. These values are less strongly held in the public than values of individualism. Fehr et al. (2009) define egalitarianism as a value regarding giving that prefers changes that promote equality. It is primarily a value in support of helping behaviors that equalize differences between the rich and poor (Arneson 2002; Fehr and Schmidt 2006; Fehr, et al. 2009; Smith 2009) and is defined particularly by a values system that emphasizes equality of opportunity for all individuals (Arneson 2002; Fehr, et al. 2009).

⁵ Some polls say that support has increased since the SCOTUS decision upholding the individual mandate as a tax (e.g. Zengerle 2012b), while others say that support has decreased (e.g. Kaiser Family Foundation 2012b, a). The consistent finding between these disparate polls is that independents clearly have not increased their support for the bill, staying between 43% against it when "don't know" is offered as an answer (Kaiser Family Foundation 2012b, a) and around 70% against without such an option (Reuters/Ipsos poll in Zengerle 2012a).

Humanitarianism, on the other hand, is a value in support of helping behaviors, especially giving preference to those who are the poorest and most in need of help (Fehr and Schmidt 2006; Fehr, et al. 2009; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a; Smith 2009). Individualism is defined in the political literature as a belief in limited government, and generally as a value in support of behaviors that emphasize the rights of the individual, especially in the face of governmental or other organized interest controls (Federico 2006; Feldman and Zaller 1992; Gilens 2000; Lipset 1960; McClosky and Zaller 1984a). It especially emphasizes personal responsibility for success and failure, and self-reliance in times of need (Barker 2002; Feldman and Zaller 1992; McClosky and Zaller 1984a).

As previously argued in Chapter 1, these values rely on different motivations in order to affect opinions. Egalitarianism and individualism are key parts of the American ethos, representing the push and pull between democratic values of equality and support for a free market, capitalist economy, respectively (e.g. McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Tocqueville 1835). Generally, these values line up along party lines, with Democrats expressing higher levels of support for egalitarianism than individualism, and Republicans displaying the inverse value preferences. These values also appear to be part of the issue ownership dynamic of the parties, with the Democratic Party being traditionally associated with such equality issues as civil rights and redistributive programs, and Republicans campaigning on free market and individual rights issues like gun control, smaller government, and entitlement reductions (e.g. Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996).

In recent years, several voices have pointed out that the Democratic party has shied away from discussing policies in terms of equality or fairness, emphasizing instead that bills will have positive consequences for other Americans (Lakoff 2009). They have certainly stopped using the

explicitly pro-equality messages of the labor movement (e.g. Campbell 2010; Frymer 2008), and have moved towards emphasizing the needs of poor and deserving people, especially in the area of healthcare. (Oberlander 2007; USMayors.org 2007). However, some pundits have argued that this movement away from egalitarian messages is problematic for Democrats (e.g. Carville and Greenberg 2012). Because humanitarian messages are not core values, I argue that they are not as convincing as those that *are* core values like egalitarianism and individualism.

2.2.1 Determining the Values of the 2010 Affordable Care Act Debate

In order to better understand this lower efficacy of framing by Democratic elites, I next employ an analysis of the content of elite speech during the healthcare debate. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) passed the Senate 60-39 votes on December 24, 2009, and the House by a vote of 219-212 on March 21, 2010. The time directly before and during this bill's passage was a key time for party elites to win over their constituents to accept the decision that they had made (e.g. Cain, et al. 1987). In order to distinguish the content of the frames used during the healthcare debate, I examine the messages of party elites from January to March 2010. I code newspaper article quotes of politicians for the type of frame they use.

To do so, I conducted a machine-assisted content analysis of the primary press releases of Congressional leaders and found these identified frames to be present in the majority of press statements. Leaders' press release statements were employed to represent the majority of party statements because of the high importance of these leaders in shaping the national agenda. Research suggests that leadership is far more visible than the median member, though constrained by their beliefs in the chambers (Woon 2008, 2009; Woon and Pope 2008).

Congressional leadership often comprises the most public face of the party (Cobb and Elder 1983) and these leaders are able to move political opinion through frames on their own (Brandon and Mutz 2009; Carmines and Wagner 2006; Wagner 2007, 2010) – many times displaying more loyalty to their partisan counterparts than to their own constituency (Woon 2009). Thus I argue that their frames, rather than the media’s employment of them, are the important factor to understanding *attempts* to shape the national agenda with appeals to values, over the more commonly-studies newspaper frames. Given this plan, I identified the key schemas of egalitarian, humanitarian, and individualism frames in the speech of the leadership of the 111th Congress (Jan 2009 – Jan 2011), as well as an additional frame about the process of passing the bill, which are detailed in the following paragraphs.

The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program allows researchers to determine the degree to which speakers use certain words in communication and to classify these words according to pre-determined categories. Beginning with the provided dictionary and base classifications within the software, three coders classified 85 unique words and phrases as part of the dialogue of humanitarian, egalitarian, individualistic, or process frames⁶. Next, analysis was conducted on the press releases of all Congressional leaders in the House and Senate of the 111th Congress, during the period of December 1, 2009 (when the bill first passed out of committee in the Senate) to March 31, 2010 (when the Affordable Care Act was signed into law by President Obama)⁷. In cases where Congressional leaders had since left the body due to scandal or death, Lexis-Nexis *CQ Congressional Press Releases* searches were conducted, requests were made to former staff members, and the Internet Wayback Machine website was employed, in an effort to

⁶ These terms, as well as intercoder reliability scores, are reported in Appendix A.

⁷ All of the leaders, both coded and uncoded, and their positions are listed in Appendix D.

ensure that there were no systematic message differences between those still in Congress and those who had left. If, after all, this issue was important to explaining Democratic defeats in 2010, it may follow that those who were least successful in framing their positions were most likely to be defeated or resign. However due to these duplicate efforts, press releases were located for nearly all of the leadership members, omitting only three Republican and three Democratic leaders out of 29 leaders⁸. As the task of this analysis is not just a test of causation but rather to establish that separate frames *were* employed by the parties – most importantly, I argue that the humanitarian frame was most commonly invoked in Democratic communication. I report descriptive statistics for the word analysis, broken down by party member, in the figures below. Lastly, I show the average frame percentage scores by party for the entire leadership. The number of press releases analyzed for each member varied from two (Robert Menendez) to 49 and 51 (Nancy Pelosi and John Boehner, respectively), with the average number of press releases per member being 12.23. LIWC treats each press release as one case, calculating the percentage of the statement that each class of words makes up and reporting a raw percentage for each case. This allows for an average calculation per member, reported in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below.

⁸ Specifically, those omitted after numerous attempts to obtain archival press releases were Eric Cantor (R-VA), Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI), Jon Kyl (R-AZ), Robert Byrd (D-WV, deceased), Charles Schumer (D-NY), and Harry Reid (D-NV). The current press releases that were found are well balanced between Democrats and Republicans, and do provide more than 100 cases with which to establish the words found in each party.

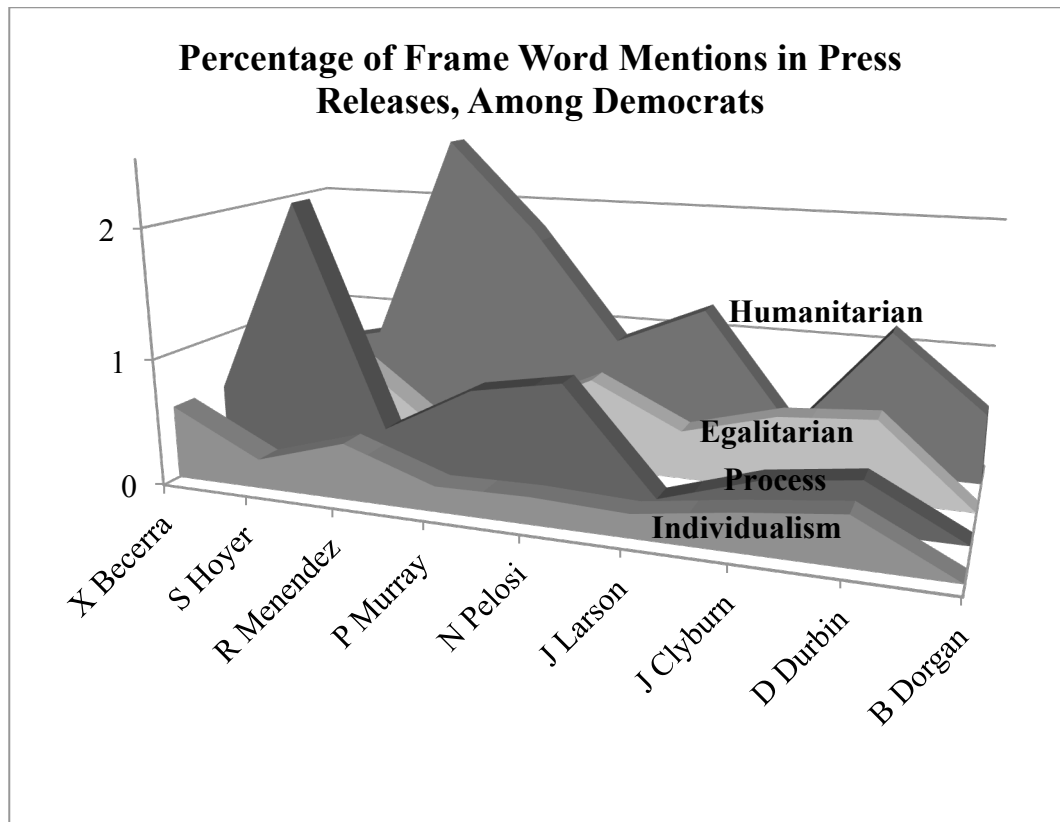


Figure 2.1: 'Frame Word Mentions, Democrats'

As Figure 2.1 reveals, not a single Democrat primarily employed words identified with the individualism frame. In fact, the vast majority appeared to frame healthcare as a *humanitarian* issue. This is consistent with what we know about both the organizing policy principles of the Democratic party, as well as the literature about the themes that liberals and conservatives use to understand their relative support or dislike of social programs (e.g. Abramowitz 1994; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Adams 1997; Gilens 2000). While substantive percentages are fairly low, it is important to note here that the focus is on comparing frames against one another, to determine which were the dominant frames used by Democrats

and Republicans in Congressional leadership⁹. Process speech were words and phrases about the passage of the bill, and also encapsulated one argument put forth by members of the G.O.P. that Democrats were trying to push through “backroom” deals and calling for open negotiations, as well as Democratic explanations of the “fight” to pass the bill, statements about momentum in Congress, and responses to Republican criticisms about openness. From this linguistic analysis, it appears clear that the Democrats used the theme of humanitarianism most often in their press releases regarding the Affordable Care Act.

Figure 2.2 below displays the results when the same linguistic analysis was applied to Republican press releases.

⁹ Press releases were also analyzed for references to death, work, life, and social words. Results for these items are available upon request, however it is noteworthy that Republicans also had higher percentages of words about work (4.72% versus 4.36%), lending some confirmation to the dominance of the individualism frame in their speech. Perhaps a harbinger of Tea Party activism to come or as a response to their own constituents, Republicans also employed far more negative emotion words (1.72% versus 0.92%) and more terms associated with anger (0.47% versus 0.27%). These particular analyses are based on the included dictionary developed by the software’s programmers, Drs. James W. Pennebaker (chair, dept of Psychology at UT Austin), Roger J. Booth (associate prof of health, University of Auckland), and Martha E. Francis, which was designed to capture cognitive and affective linguistic differences in written communication, especially official speech. For more details, see <http://www.liwc.net/>.

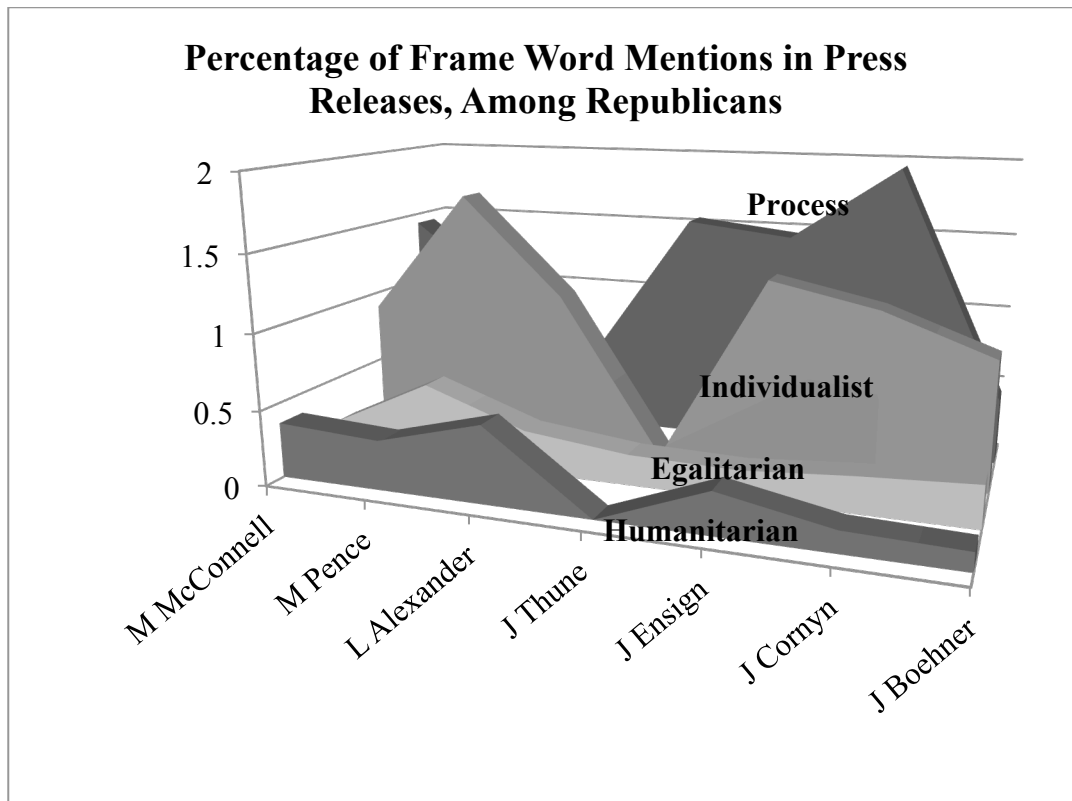


Figure 2.2: ‘Frame Word Mentions, Republicans’

As we see in Figure 2.2, with the exception of talk about the process of passing a bill, nearly all of the Republican communication patterns display the opposite distribution of their Democratic counterparts. Humanitarian speech never rises above 0.5% of the total message of Republicans, and only Senator Lamar Alexander utilized even that high of a level. It is worth noting that Sen. Alexander, the Conference Chair of the Republican Party, announced he would not be running for re-election in 2011, citing concerns about winning re-election. While we cannot determine it from this analysis, we may speculate that Sen. Alexander was out of step with the Republican leadership and the rest of the party in using even this small fraction of humanitarian speech to characterize the healthcare debate. In all, no Republican leaders emphasized humanitarianism or egalitarianism over the framing terms of individualism and the

process of passing the bill. The next Figure 2.3 displays averages for the party leaders by frame type.

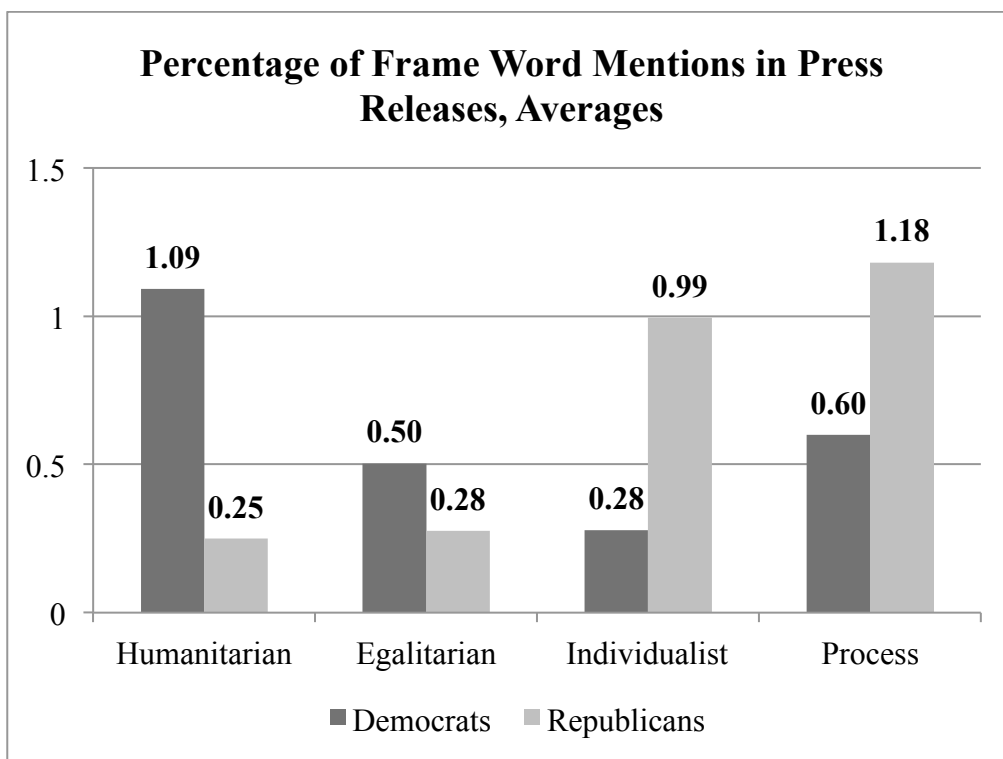


Figure 2.3: ‘Frame Word Mentions, Averages by Party’

Figure 3 confirms that Republican and Democratic leaders used substantively different terms when communicating with the press about healthcare reform. Democratic leaders overwhelmingly favored the humanitarian frame, with 1.09% of their words in press releases being those associated with this frame. Republican leaders, however, favored terms emphasizing individualism (0.99%) and the process of passing the law (1.18%). This appears to be strong evidence that there were separate, competing visions among Congressional leadership about how to describe the healthcare reform bill, and that these visions can be organized along thematic frame lines.

2.2.2 Testing the Effects of Values

As argued in Chapter 1, thematic values are *not* all equal. I contend that those values that are core to the American story (egalitarianism and individualism) should be significantly more motivating than humanitarianism. This is because humanitarianism is inherently *not* a value that organizes the way people think about the world; instead, it relies primarily on situational empathy to motivate actions and attitudes (Decety 2005; Esping-Anderson 1990; Johnson, et al. 2009; Monroe 1996; Smith 2009). As the primary value used by Democrats in their speech about the healthcare reform act, humanitarianism-themed speech may have hindered acceptance of the bill among the public in two ways.

First, I argue that employing humanitarian frames worked in a straightforward manner on *attitudes* to depress the level of support an individual had towards the bill. That is, by attempting to sell the public on healthcare reform using humanitarian language, Democrats used the weakest possible message in favor of their preference for reform. By contrast, Republicans, by using individualist language in their messages of opposition, were employing a core value that is key to organizing feelings about the way government should work (e.g. McClosky and Zaller 1984c). For the GOP message opposing healthcare reform, individualism was the strongest possible value that they could have employed in framing the debate. I argue that the best way Democrats could have countered the success of Republican individualist frames would have been to employ egalitarian values in their frames. This would have resulted in higher rates of support for the bill, because it would have activated underlying strong core values about how the world works and about American politics.

Secondly, humanitarian frames may also have had an effect on the type of *information* individuals preferred about healthcare reform. Research indicates that the kind of information

one receives has significant effects on their vote quality, political knowledge, and even political beliefs (Althaus and Kim 2006; Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009; Barker 2005; Barker and Hansen 2005; Bartels 1993, 1996; Lupia 1994). While we know that people are increasingly seeking out information with which they already agree (i.e. Stroud 2011), we know very little about attempts to manipulate the *kind* of information individuals seek (but see Barker 2002). Experimental research indicates that the extent to which individuals select confirmatory information depends significantly on the perceived *strength* and *accessibility* of the argument they have previously heard (Hart, et al. 2009; Nabi 2003). As previously discussed, frames work by increasing the weight that an individual gives to an issue, as well as increasing the accessibility of concepts that the frame emphasizes. I argue that “strong” frames – that is, those vignettes that emphasize values core to the American ethos – will work to influence the kind of information that a person chooses after exposure to such a framed message. By increasing the accessibility and strength of values tied to the issue, strong messages emphasizing core values (egalitarianism and individualism) will result in a higher propensity to select corresponding information. If successful frames can connect political issues to strongly held values among members of the public *and* ensure their perpetuation by causing individuals to choose to read stories that only emphasize the aspects of the issue with which they already agree, this points to a feedback loop in American politics and may shed light on why, for example, the healthcare debate in 2010 became more about a “government takeover” than differences in healthcare between the rich and poor.

In the next chapter, I outline a framing experiment that tests these propositions in two issues areas – healthcare reform and affirmative action. As I have previously argued, these two areas encapsulate different policy areas; healthcare as a social spending issue, and affirmative

action as a rights issue. For both issue areas, I identified the subjects' pre-existing values, randomly assigned them to read a vignette of one of the three value frame types plus a non-value "control" frame, and followed up with questions regarding their attitudes, policy preferences, and feelings towards the frame itself. Lastly, I asked them to select two magazine covers that they would like to read, of which they could choose one emphasizing the value of egalitarianism, humanitarian, individualism, or one with no value orientation (e.g. Stroud 2011). In the case of healthcare, I also asked them to select one sentence that they felt best expressed what the healthcare reform debate or debate about affirmative action was "really about." This measure allows me to ask the subject themselves to identify the frame that they think encapsulates the issue.

In all conditions, I further vary whether the newspaper article attributes the position to a Republican or Democrat, and whether the message is in favor or opposed to healthcare/affirmative action¹⁰. Varying these aspects of the frame provides a strong test of the alternative explanation that source cues, such as recognition of a party position or label, are driving frame effects (e.g. Goren, et al. 2009; Hartman and Weber 2009). It also addresses a possible alternative to Sniderman and Theriault (2004)'s finding that an individual's values determine whether the frame shows strong effects, since their experiment gave respondents only a characteristically liberal or conservative frame on social welfare.

As previously discussed, Sniderman and Theriault (2004) argue that frames are strongest when they match an individual's underlying beliefs. I have developed a scale of value preferences based in part on Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a), discussed further in chapter 3.

¹⁰ Exact language of the frames and copies of the magazine covers subjects chose can be found in the appendices.

Using this value scale, I am able to categorize subjects as egalitarian, humanitarians, and individualists. This establishes which frame actually matches a subject's values. Like Sniderman and Theriault (2004), I expect to find that a frame is strong when it matches someone's core values. However, those subjects receiving a frame emphasizing a non-core value (humanitarianism) should experience no effects on their choice of information, and will choose to read information based on their existing beliefs *before* the treatment. In the case of this experiment, this means that the humanitarian frame condition should not result in significantly different attitudes from those of control subjects.

The effects of individualism and egalitarianism should be strong because they are part of the core American values. Humanitarian appeals, by contrast, do not affect the kind of information one seeks out because humanitarianism is *not* a motivating core value, and relies on sustained empathy to be effective (for more, see Chapter 1, Johnson, et al. 2009; McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Monroe 1996). Thus, humanitarian appeals (of the sort employed by Democratic elites pursuant to the discussion of the Affordable Care Act) should create weaker attachments to attitudes and to subsequent information emphasizing humanitarianism. It is for this reason that the Democratic Party erred in its choice to employ a humanitarian frame when attempting to promote the health care reform package.

Having established humanitarianism as the dominant Democratic Party frame, I next show how this choice backfired on Democrats and why.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE: HOW VALUES AFFECT INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES

As I argue in Chapter 2, Congressional elites strategically framed their communications with the public, emphasizing different values in “selling” their desired outcomes for the Affordable Care Act. Assuming MoCs to be rational actors seeking to garner public support for their policy preferences (e.g. Arnold 1990), it follows that they would attempt to use the strongest and most persuasive issue frames possible when selling their views to the public. Indeed, research shows that MoCs use key rhetorical features such as values they believe to be most important to their constituents when talking about policy debates in the media (Box-Steffensmeier, et al. 1997; Brandon and Mutz 2009; Druckman, et al. 2004; Harris 2010; Jerit 2008). This, in turn, can affect the media’s coverage of an issue as well as the opinions of constituents (e.g. Hänggli 2011; Hersh and Schaffner 2011; Johnson, et al. 2005). In the case of the Affordable Care Act, I have shown that Democratic leaders in Congress primarily chose to strategically deploy press releases framing the issue as one of humanitarianism, or means tested help for others. A large amount of existing literature suggests that humanitarian value appeals can convince *both* Democrats and Republicans to support social spending programs (e.g. Jacoby 2000). In their observational analysis of American National Election Study data, Feldman and Steenbergen (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001b), for example, find that humanitarian appeals result in the highest levels of support for social programs among ideological conservatives and liberals alike. Based on

findings along these lines, we should expect that the Democratic message, with its emphasis of humanitarian reforms, would be successful among the public. However, as opinion polls have shown, support for healthcare has been mixed at best, and rarely engenders the kind of passion among supporters that it does among those against it. I argue that this is due in large part to the selection of humanitarianism as the frame value type.

3.1 FRAMING IN THE LITERATURE

3.1.1 Frame Messages and Effects

Frames are generally thought to be strongest when they are repeated with intensity (e.g. Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Zaller 1992) and when they are stronger than other frames, such as when they provide information that is from a credible source (Druckman 2001a), that resonates with strongly held values (Chong 2000; Sniderman and Theriault 2004), and that is consistent with the subject's own internal values (Brewer 2001; Druckman and Nelson 2003; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2001; Shah, et al. 1996); that is, they “match” the individual's inherent values (e.g. Sniderman and Theriault 2004).

In order to better understand this relationship between the message and its effects, we can think of people as falling into value categories, such that they see the world and newly proposed policies in terms of these values. Individuals can adopt egalitarian, humanitarian, and individualist values as prisms through which they understand politics. As established in Chapter 1, these values are an integral part of one's attitudes and their perceptions of new information.

When these values are powerful motivators, appeals to these individuals using *other* values should do little or nothing to their existing beliefs and attitudes. That is, if one holds a belief in egalitarianism, a strong value, then individualist appeals (another strong value) should have little effect on their attitudes and information preferences. They should remain strong supporters of healthcare reform and continue to seek out egalitarian information when it is offered. This is consistent with existing theory of “matching” values such as in Sniderman and Theriault outline in their 2004 article. However, I contend that when a value is a *weak motivator* (in the case of humanitarianism), that matching should *not* matter. Instead, the weakest arguments should either have no effects at all, or even sway those who hear it *away* from the desired outcome.

I test these propositions using more than 1900 subjects and two issue areas – healthcare and affirmative action. Importantly, I show that they are the key factor in understanding the direction and strength of opinion towards the issues of healthcare and affirmative action. I show that with both healthcare and affirmative action, individuals were not affected in the way politicians would desire by humanitarian appeals—at least not in the sense that would enable proponents of health care to attract their support with humanitarian-based appeals. In fact, many key constituents for Democrats, including those holding values in conflict with their partisanship, actually decreased their support for healthcare when presented with the humanitarian argument in favor of healthcare. In addition, humanitarians themselves proved to be more malleable, and could easily be “captured” by either side with an egalitarian or individualist message. I confirm these findings using the affirmative action issue area, furthering the argument that humanitarianism is a relatively weak value for the purposes of issue framing, not the strong bridging value previously thought.

3.1.2 Value Framing and Attitude Strength

A vast literature in political science as well as related disciplines establishes that values such as individualism, egalitarianism, and others undergird mass belief systems, such that they serve as guides around which individuals structure their beliefs and attitudes (e.g. Feldman 1988; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Rohan 2000; Schwartz and Bilsky 1990). An individual can be said to identify with a value when he or she is able to choose that value consistently *in the face of conflict* from other, competing values (e.g. Peffley, et al. 2001; Tetlock 1986). If, for example, an individual consistently ranks his or her support for egalitarian, or equality inducing, statements as higher than their support for individualist statements, one can label that person as one who holds egalitarian values. This belief in equality, then, should inform an individual's political beliefs and attitudes to the extent that the value is *strong* and the issue appears to be *related* to this value.

This relationship between value and the issue can often be manipulated through issue framing, a connection that has been tested in a large number of contributions in the literature (for review, see Druckman 2011). Variations like more reputable source cues (Goren, et al. 2009; Hartman and Weber 2009), patriotic themes (Groeling and Baum 2008) and the salience of risk (Kellstedt, et al. 2008; Tversky and Kahneman 1987) can all change the relationship between the frame and the attitude of the subject receiving the message. The exact *type* of value has been shown to have a strong but inconsistent effect on the relative strength of an issue frame, with some values having effects only without competition and in certain situations (Barker 2005; Brewer 2001; Druckman 2004). Sniderman and Theriault (2004) test how individuals' values temper the effects of framing attempts on attitudes, showing that when a frame emphasizes values that an individual strongly holds, the individual shows more consistency between his

values and his choices. Having a strong affinity for a value, then, should make an individual less susceptible to competing arguments that emphasize that value, but only when that value is strong.

3.2 HYPOTHESES: THE EFFECTS OF VALUES ON ATTITUDES

The arguments in this chapter distill to two primary statements: that, contrary to previous findings, humanitarianism is a relatively weaker value in framing political arguments for the American people, and that humanitarians themselves are far more easily swayed than other value types. Given these two ideas, I focus on the corresponding theoretical arguments: first, that humanitarianism will not, in the aggregate, have the desired effects on opinions in the experimental environment. That is, humanitarian arguments will *not* be able to move people in the direction desired, and will move people away from healthcare, even when the appeal is *towards* support of the reform effort.

Second, I argue that humanitarians *themselves* will not be affected by their own value appeals and instead can be swayed by egalitarian and individualist appeals. The crux of this argument is that those who hold humanitarianism to be the strongest value governing their decisions are more malleable people, since this value is *not* part of the key cherished values of the American ethos. While I discuss the repercussions of this greater malleability in Chapter 4, understanding these humanitarians as less committed to their underling beliefs is important to understanding the effects of value appeals on attitudes towards healthcare support, the focus of this chapter.

This results in two key themes for understanding the differential effects of value frames – the values of the frames themselves and the values of the individuals being “pitched” to by the parties. With that in mind, I generate the key questions of this chapter:

Cherished values. Do all values affect individuals equally? I contend that *cherished values*, closest to the American ethos, such as individualism and egalitarianism, should exert a stronger force on opinions than those that are less associated with this ethos, like humanitarianism. The values of egalitarianism, or equality for all, and individualism, or support for individual freedoms, have long been found to be strongly held and cherished values in the American ethos (e.g. Bellah, et al. 2008; Chong, et al. 1983; McClosky and Zaller 1984c). However, as I argue in Chapter 1, humanitarianism is not a key part of this value structure. This weaker effect of means-tested appeals to help others may be due to the difficulty individuals have sustaining empathy for others. That is, appeals to help only those who are “deserving” of help can engender judgments about who, exactly, should be considered deserving. As discussed in Chapter One, empathy for others is hard to maintain for most Americans (de Waal 2008; Decety 2005; Johnson, et al. 2009; Monroe 1996; Schwartz 1975), and often is wrapped up in conceptions of poor people as lazy, predominately African American, and therefore prone to crime (e.g. Gilens 2000). Research shows that judgments of deservingness, especially those connected to social welfare and government spending programs, often activate evaluations through this negative lens of race (e.g. Gilens 1995, 1996, 2000; Goren 2003, 2008; Hurwitz and Peffley 2010; Kinder and Sanders 1996)

I argue that, without knowing anything about a person’s value structure, appeals using these relatively stronger cherished values will result in individual changes in support for healthcare and affirmative action, while appeals using weaker, non-cherished values will not.

- *H3.1: The value appeals of individualism and egalitarianism will show significant effects on the attitudes of the subject towards healthcare and affirmative action, in the aggregate.*
- *H3.2: The value appeal of humanitarianism will not show significant effects on the attitudes of the subject towards healthcare and affirmative action, in the aggregate.*

“Going” home to value preferences. Research also suggests that issue frames work best when they match an individual’s *pre-existing values*, such that they are consistent with already held important guides for organizing the world and information (e.g. Arceneaux 2011; Chong 2000; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2001; Peffley, et al. 2001; Shah, et al. 1996; Sniderman and Theriault 2004). In their 2004 investigation of the competing frame environment of a “real world” policy debate, Sniderman and Theriault explore how holding beliefs like egalitarianism can affect what messages people believe. As they explain, “When citizens are exposed to a complete rather than an edited version of a debate, they do not succumb to ambivalence or fall into confusion. On the contrary, even though as part of the process of debate they are exposed to an argument at odds with their general orientation, *they tend to ‘go home,’ to pick out the side of the issue that fits their deeper-lying political principles,*” (148, emphasis added). They argue that this desire to express their pre-existing beliefs results from the desire of most citizens to avoid dissonant political beliefs (e.g. Festinger 1957), in the same way that Republicans marry Republicans or Democrats avoid news sources like Fox News (e.g. Stroud 2011). In their examination of dual-frame and single-frame environments (the former emulating the “real world” and the latter the environmental lab), they find that exposure to both a frame matching

one's beliefs and one matching those of the opposite side results in a .15 decrease in "correct" opinions, or selecting options matching one's beliefs. Though acknowledging the effects are smaller than expected, they state that, "the consistency of underlying principles and issue choices should be higher in the default [value-consistent] condition than in the dual frame condition." Because Sniderman and Theriault are primarily concerned with establishing the differences between a single-frame and dual frame environment, the experimental design does not allow for complete comparison between the frame *values* themselves. The design of my experiment attempts to add to this understanding, going further by testing whether different frame effects are due to the values of the individuals, the matching of those appeals to individuals' values, or whether a host of additional explanations like partisan cues (e.g. Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Schaffner and Streb 2002 or directional bias (e.g. Taber and Lodge 2006; Tversky and Kahneman 1974) explain frame power.

Sniderman and Theriault offer a compelling argument that fits well with what we know about cognitive dissonance. However, it provides us with challenging predictions of what "works" and why. On one hand, if people "go home" to their chosen values, they should display higher agreement with frames when the information emphasizes values matching their own. On the other hand, if they respond to dissonant information by *still* "going home," as Sniderman and Theriault (2004) find, the effects of matching a frame to an individual's values could be indistinguishable from zero. I argue that the strength of matching opinions may be contingent on the degree to which the value is key to the American ethos. Because humanitarianism is not a key value, we should see that people do not "go home" on the issue; that is, I do not expect humanitarians to reject competing frames because they are not committed to the value on the whole.

By contrast, I do *not* expect to see significant changes on the part of egalitarians and individualists when presented with other cherished value arguments (individualism and egalitarianism, respectively), since they are strongly committed to their values. As previously stated, I argue that Democrats failed to successfully sell the American public on healthcare because they used the value of humanitarianism to frame their efforts. This failure is *not only* due to the relatively weaker ability of the humanitarian frame to move individuals towards healthcare reform. Such a strategic communication failure is also due to the effect of the frame to actually push some key constituencies away from reform, since it causes them to think that those receiving help are “undeserving.” Since humanitarians have already considered the deservedness of those receiving help in making their decision to support or reject reform, they should not move on their opinions when receiving the humanitarian frame. These effects should become clear when we break down the modeled effects by value type, and result in three predictions:

- *H3.3: The value appeal of humanitarianism will not show significant effects on humanitarians’ support of healthcare, regardless of frame direction.*
- *H3.4: The value appeal of humanitarianism will show significant negative effects on support of healthcare among those who hold cherished values (egalitarians and individualists), regardless of frame direction.*
- *H3.5: When egalitarians/individualists receive individualist/egalitarian information, they will not show significant effects on their support of healthcare.*

- *H3.6: When humanitarians receive the individualist or egalitarian frame, they will show significant effects on their support of healthcare.*

In summary, I argue that humanitarian arguments are simply not as strong as those of the “cherished values” – egalitarianism and individualism. One way I posit we will see this are the significant differences in frame effects on attitudes. With these specific hypotheses in mind, I next turn to describing the experiment that tests these propositions. The first experiment shows how the selection of humanitarian frames failed the Democrats in the 2010 ACA healthcare reform debate, while a smaller second experiment testing how these frames work in the affirmative action debate shows that these effects are not entirely issue-specific. I begin with explaining the healthcare experiment and discussing results.

3.3 EXPERIMENT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.3.1 Strategy and Design

In order to determine which strategy of value emphasis results in the greatest attitudinal changes as well as whether other variables explain opinion on the ACA, I designed an experiment that tests the effects of different frame choices *relative* to each other. This results in three value appeals emphasizing individualism, humanitarianism, and egalitarianism, plus a fourth appeal condition in which no value is emphasized.

In July of 2012, 840 respondents were recruited on Amazon's Mechanical Turk to participate in a "quick study about your beliefs."¹¹ Respondents were required to be U.S. residents, and were told they would be paid \$0.30 for their time for reporting back a randomly generated competition code at the end of the survey, resulting in an hourly rate of \$3.025. Of the 850 respondents recruited, 810 respondents completed the entire survey and were included in the experimental results¹².

Respondents were redirected via an html link to the survey experiment hosted on Qualtrics, which took an average of 5 minutes to complete. The first section included standard demographic variables (respondent age, gender, race, and employment status), a measure of political attentiveness, and a three-point party identification scale with a follow-up four-point scale for those answering in the middle.

Section two of the survey included questions designed to categorize respondents as egalitarians, humanitarians, or individualists, constituting the value preference scale measure for each individual. These statements were culled from sources such as Feldman and Steenburgen's (2001a) measures of support for humanitarianism and egalitarianism. The measures and their operationalization are detailed in Appendix B, Section 1.

¹¹ Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) is a recruiting forum designed to pay individuals small amounts of money for simple tasks that can be done online. It allows for fast and inexpensive sample recruitment, as well as access to a far more representative sample than available among traditional university sophomores (e.g. Sears 1986). Attempts to recreate classic behavioral experiments have shown that results are quite similar to those with traditionally-obtained samples (Berinsky, et al. 2012). Since internal validity is ensured in experimental testing by varying only one aspect and examining differences (e.g. Shadish, et al. 2001), problems of validity in experimental research primarily arises from concerns that findings might not apply to the greater population. However, a fairly balanced demographic profile of respondents leads me to argue that this external validity is not an issue given the sample. Additionally, theoretical predictions such as those in this project, which require strongly held values could be quite problematic if tested among college students with only weakly formed belief structures (Sears 1986). For more, see Berinsky, et al. 2012; Buhrmester, et al. 2011; Mason and Suri 2011; but see also Richey and Taylor 2012).

¹² Extensive pre-testing was also conducted, with n=892 subjects being included in this pre-test group. This pre-testing allowed for identification of several potential problems, including non-participation in a planned second wave and the need for multiple opportunities to select information. More about this pre-test can be found in the Appendices. Those participating in the pre-test were not recruited for the resulting final experimental treatment.

The third section of the survey is the experiment, designed to manipulate the effects of values on attitudes towards the ACA. Four conditions of frame value type were used – *control*, *individualist*, *humanitarian*, and *egalitarian*. In addition, each value-invoking quote in the experiment was attributed to either a *Democrat* or a *Republican* for each of the conditions. Lastly, each frame type was presented as either an argument *for* or *against* healthcare reform. This resulted in a 4x4 (three value types plus control x Dem/Rep/Pro/Con) between-subjects design with 16 cells, allowing me to determine the relative effects of value frames as well as alternative explanations for frame strength.

In section four, I measure the effect of the frame argument in several ways. First, I ask them to rate the argument’s persuadability and believability. This is an important measure of whether the argument can be *expected* to have any kind of effect on the individual, as those experiments that are rated as very low on these argument quality measures should not be expected to have a great deal of an effect on individuals’ opinions. This provides a validity check between experimental cells. Next, in the healthcare condition, I ask individuals to rate their support for “the healthcare reforms enacted by the President and Congress in 2010,” using a 1-6 sliding scale¹³. This allows for comparison of the effects *between groups* of receiving a frame emphasizing one value or the other on support for a particular issue, an outcome with significant political “real world” consequences for those attempting to convince people to support or oppose a social program.

In section five, subjects were asked to again rate their support for the statements used to rate value preferences in the section two. This provides a measure of post-treatment support for

¹³ Throughout the questionnaire, I strove to avoid middle responses and discourage satisficing, and therefore used even numbered choice categories whenever possible (e.g. Babbie 1990; Krosnick 1991).

underlying values, to determine how exposure to matching or non-matching values can affect an individual's attachment to his or her own pre-existing values. The relationship between receiving a value frame and their post-treatment values will be explored in Chapter 4. Subjects next answer another two questions designed, as in section one, to determine how much attention the subject pays to politics – “only when important things happen,” or “most of the time,” and how often they read, listen to, or watch the news on a typical weekday. These questions provide both a secondary measure of attentiveness to politics and also a distractor task between the experimental stimulus and the next task.

Information preferences are assessed in section six, in a task that mirrors Stroud's magazine cover experiment in her 2011 (pp. 214-8) examination of news choices. Stroud designed an experiment to evaluate if high or low partisan information environments could change the kind of purposeful selections people made, in an effort to expose themselves to confirmatory political beliefs. She simulates the act of finding magazines on a table in a waiting room, and manipulates the kind of partisan information available to subjects by changing the actual, published magazines on the table as they arrive. This simulation of the information choice environment is a useful technique for this project, in order to help us understand the downstream effects of value framing. However, since Stroud uses actual magazines such as *The Economist*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Nation*, she is not able to control for the differences in subject matter, cover art, and headline length. I therefore employed the services of a graphic designer to manipulate an actual magazine cover of *Newsweek*, keeping art, headline length, and subject matter all consistent. This allows the experimental choices to vary *only* in the value emphasized in the headline, in order to isolate the effects of value frames on information preferences. I explore the downstream information preference effects in Chapter 5.

3.4 EFFECTS OF VALUES ON ATTITUDES: METHODS AND RESULTS

As previously explained, I vary the source cues (Democrat/Republican), values emphasized (humanitarianism, egalitarianism, and individualism), and the direction of the frame (support or oppose). I hold that strong frames should be able to move people that are not wedded to strong values already in the direction the frame advocates, either for or against an issue. I hold that humanitarianism is a weak value *and* that those who hold it are less likely to be wedded to their beliefs or influenced by them.

In order to test my hypotheses, I construct a series of dummy variables that indicate which treatment type frame a subject received. Those receiving an individualist frame are indicated with the *Individualism* variable, those reading the humanitarian frame labeled as *Humanitarianism*, and those in the egalitarian condition indicated as *Egalitarian*. This allows me to show the relative effects of each frame type across conditions, while controlling for other aspects of the model including demographics such as age, gender, employment status, and educational level, as well as political variables such as party ID (*Party ID* - 5 category, where 1=strong Republican and 5=strong Democrat) and self-rated political attentiveness (*Political Attention*, where 1=never pay attention to politics and 5=always pay attention to politics). From the value scales, I coded a 3-category scale of strength of values among individuals (*vstrong3*), depending on how many times in the paired value categories they chose the strongest value for them. In addition, I include a dummy variable, *Positive*, which indicates whether the direction of the frame is in support of (*Positive*=1) or in opposition to the issue (*Positive*=0). Lastly, I coded a dummy variable, *ttDEM* to indicate whether the frame attributed its key quote to a Democrat

(with 0=Republican) Member of Congress. Since this variable never approached significance in any of the models, I limit its discussion to validation.

Since White's tests indicate the possible presence of heteroskedasticity, I use a linear regression with robust standard errors as a conservative test of the effect of each frame on the subject's support for the issue area¹⁴. The control group (*ttc*) acts as the reference group for purposes of comparison of the treatment type effects.

3.4.1: Cherished Values

As I argue in the first chapter and outline in *H3.1* and *H3.2*, individualism and egalitarianism appear to be strong and key values in the American ethos. I maintain that humanitarianism is not part of these key values, at least potentially because it may activate judgments about deservingness and race that leads people to be less altruistic towards others. While I cannot test this argument directly, I can examine the degree to which humanitarianism structures other choices—something I will address by first showing how the different value frame types affect the attitudes of individuals regarding the Affordable Care Act, without regards to their underlying value preferences.

I test the effects of receiving these frames with controls for political attributes of individuals as well as standard demographic variables. Since I measure individuals' attitudes regarding healthcare reform (*shealth*) as a continuous variable, I use linear regression to

¹⁴ White's test for the presence of heteroskedasticity does not assume prior knowledge of the data's distribution, nor does it depend on the normality assumption. It is therefore a strong test of whether the data contains sub-populations with different distribution on the variables than others (Gujarati and Porter 2008; White 1980). The presence of such heteroskedasticity can disrupt reliable linear regression testing, however using robust standard errors can overcome these possible errors, including the possibility of rejecting the null hypothesis incorrectly (Angrist and Pischke 2009; Fox 1997). Such use of robust standard errors can be considered a better way of dealing with heteroskedasticity than, for example, weighted least squares, as it is far less likely than weighted OLS to change the parameter estimates or to suffer from mistakes in weighting (see, for example, Fox 1997).

determine the effects of the value frames on such attitudes. Results are shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: ‘Effect of Value Frame Treatments on Support for Healthcare, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model		
	a	b	c
Treatment type			
<i>Individualism</i>	-0.525** (0.270)	-0.509** (0.226)	-0.518** (0.223)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	-0.354 (0.284)	-0.407 (0.231)	-0.414 (0.231)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	0.219* (0.127)	1.155* (0.221)	0.396* (0.198)
Treatment direction			
<i>Positive</i>	0.167 (0.194)	0.198 (0.162)	0.209 (0.161)
Political Attributes			
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	-	1.039** (0.063)	1.054** (0.062)
<i>Political Attention</i>	-	0.266** (0.071)	0.227** (0.072)
Demographics			
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-0.044 (0.164)
<i>Employed</i>	-	-	0.088 (0.173)
<i>edu4</i>	-	-	0.337** (0.109)
N	810	810	810
R-sq	0.029	0.319	0.320
<small>Entries are robust OLS regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.</small>			

Results of the linear regression among all subjects (Columns 1-3) show support for *H3.1* – receiving either the egalitarian frame or the individualist frame had a significant impact on the

subject's support for healthcare reform in the aggregated group. In addition, there appears to be strong support for the hypothesis that humanitarianism is not a motivating "cherished value" (H3.2), as receiving the humanitarian frame has no significant effects on subjects' opinions on healthcare.

Additionally, the regression coefficient of political attentiveness is significant and positive, measured by answers to the question, "About how often in the past month did you read or watch stories about politics on television, the Internet, newspapers, magazines, or anything else?" (5=Almost every day, 1=Not at all). The most educated respondents (recoded as 1=High school or less, 4=More than college) were most likely to be strongly in support of healthcare¹⁵. Lastly, models b and c (Columns 2 and 3) show that party identification (1=Strong Republican, 5=Strong Democrat) is significant and positive, with stronger Democrats also being far stronger supporters of the healthcare reform. This is unsurprising, given the strong association of this bill with President Obama (with opponents, and later supporters, labeling it "Obamacare"). Since approval of the President is deeply tied to partisan beliefs, we should expect these aspects to be related (Brace and Hinckley 1991; Gronke and Newman 2003; Sigelman 1979). However, it is important to note that these results are significant *even in the face of powerful predictors of political beliefs like political attentiveness and party identification*. This indicates that strong frames truly have their own effects, above and beyond those effects of political sophistication and attention, and partisanship.

To determine the differences in the impact of the value frames, one may consider the case of the average control group subject, who placed their support for the Affordable Care Act at

¹⁵ It is clear that education and political attentiveness are often strongly related, and the correlation between these categories is 0.132 and significant. Party ID is also significantly correlated with political attentiveness, though with a relatively weak correlation of 0.076.

6.41¹⁶. This support drops to 5.95, regardless of party ID, value preference, or any other variables - simply by receiving a frame that invokes individualism in describing the debate over healthcare reform. If the subject receives a humanitarian frame, this support rises slightly to 6.12. The egalitarian frame provides the largest jump, resulting in a mean support level of 6.71. Differences between these means are significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level.

In order to ensure this was not a problem of one frame being particularly more believable or persuasive than another, I included self-report ratings of these characteristics on a six-point scale. In general, subjects rated the positive frames as slightly more believable (3.65, versus 3.06 for negative frames), and slightly more persuasive (3.56, versus 2.87 for negative frames). Importantly, those receiving the humanitarian frame actually rated the frame as more persuasive (+0.33) and believable (+0.22) than those receiving the other frame types. This occurred despite the finding that the humanitarian frame has far *less* of a persuasive effect on its recipients¹⁷. The finding that individuals report the humanitarian frame is more convincing fits well with other observational studies such as Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a, who finds that individuals *self-report* as strongly identifying with humanitarian values. Indeed, this would seem to indicate that Democrats were correct in choosing to emphasize humanitarian, or needs-based help for others, in their messages about healthcare. However, casual analysis based on the experimental data shows an opposite story – humanitarianism is not successful in influencing *any* of the groups to move their opinions in the way that the frame vignette emphasizes.

¹⁶ Subjects were asked to rate their support for “the healthcare reforms enacted by the President and Congress in 2010,” on a slider scale offering ratings from 0 (Strongly Oppose) to 10 (Strongly Support). Contact author for online database containing this and other figures.

¹⁷ Specifically, those receiving the positive (pro-reform) individualist frame reported significantly lower ratings of believability (-0.62) and persuasiveness (-0.42), at $p \geq 0.10$. Somewhat unsurprisingly, those in the control group also rated their frame as significantly less believable (-0.34) and persuasive (-0.68) than those in the value-laden frame treatment groups.

3.4.2 “Going Home”: Values and the Effects of Frame Attempts

I select on the highest value type indicated by the subject’s responses to the value trade-off series, and assign each individual a value “type”¹⁸. This provides me with a category in which to place each individual, providing information about his or her pre-existing value preferences. Table 3.2 below shows the relative effects of the treatment types on the different value groups of egalitarians, humanitarians, and individualists. Again, I expect that individualists and egalitarians will “go home” when faced with a frame emphasizing other cherished values, since they are strongly committed to these cherished values. However, humanitarians should be highly susceptible to other value appeals, since the value to which they are committed is context and judgment dependent. Results of breaking down the model effects by value type are shown in Table 3.2 below. Cells in which the frame an individual receives matches their underlying values as measured by the value trade-offs scale are denoted in Table 3.2 by boxes.

¹⁸ For a more detailed explanation of the value types, see Chapter Two. For the text of the trade-off scale items, see Appendix B, Section 1.

Table 3.2: ‘Effect of Matching Value Frame Treatments on Support for Healthcare, by Value Preference’

Explanatory variables	Model		
	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type			
<i>Individualism</i>	-0.408 (0.330)	-0.973** (0.324)	-0.322 (0.531)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	-0.827** (0.35)	-0.221 (0.370)	-0.836** (0.436)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	-0.508 (0.362)	1.153** (0.318)	-0.207 (0.470)
Treatment direction			
<i>Positive</i>	0.261 (0.246)	0.667** (0.236)	-0.614 (0.358)
Political Attributes			
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	0.803** (0.124)	0.928** (0.099)	0.695** (0.126)
<i>Political Attention</i>	0.312** (0.112)	0.301** (0.106)	-0.178 (0.159)
<i>vstrong3</i>	0.015 (0.166)	-0.019 (0.165)	-0.772** (0.222)
Demographics			
<i>Male</i>	-0.162 (0.260)	-0.344 (0.244)	-0.055 (0.362)
<i>Employed</i>	0.202 (0.263)	-0.029 (0.279)	0.096 (0.352)
<i>edu4</i>	0.352** (0.152)	0.223 (0.166)	0.355 (0.232)
N	309	300	180
R-sq	0.233	0.388	0.285

Entries are robust OLS regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$. ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables. Boxes denote matching frame value types.

Results in Table 3.2 show that support for hypothesis 3.4 (*H3.4*), which argues that hearing the humanitarian frame will have negative effects on egalitarians and individualists. As shown by the negative and significant coefficients of -0.837 among egalitarians (Column 1) and -0.836 among individualists (Column 3), humanitarianism appears to be a de-motivating value. That is, among egalitarians and individualists alike, the humanitarian attempt to move opinions *towards or away from* support result in *decreased* support. The humanitarian frame displays a remarkable ability to cause backlash to its message among individualists and egalitarians, who both moved away from support of healthcare *regardless of the direction of the frame and in the face of controls such as partisanship and political attentiveness*¹⁹.

It is also clear that matching the values of an individual to the frame does not explain the affects of frames on support. First, humanitarians do not respond to “their” frame, consistent with the idea that humanitarianism is a weak motivating value. This is indicated by the negative and insignificant coefficient of -0.221 in Column 2. However, by the same token, the other value frames do not have significant effects on those who “match” that value, as indicated by the results in Columns 1 and 3. As I argue in hypothesis 3.5 (*H3.5*), we should not see significant movement among egalitarians and individualists, especially when they receive an individualist or egalitarian frame, respectively. This is because egalitarians and individualists already have strong beliefs against individualism and egalitarianism respectively, and therefore do not respond to these attempt to change their minds. When faced with information from the individualist and egalitarian value frames respectively, egalitarians and individualists stay committed to their beliefs and, as Sniderman and Theriault (2004) describe, “go home” to their value positions.

¹⁹ I also run separate analyses to determine that the frame direction does not matter among just those respondents that received the humanitarian frame. For the purposes of brevity, I omit these results.

It is also clear that the individualist and egalitarian frames have the strongest effect on humanitarian subjects, who move their opinions considerably based on the value and direction of the frame. This is consistent with hypothesis 3.6 (*H3.6*), which argues that humanitarians significantly change their opinion about healthcare if they hear a frame that emphasizes “cherished values.” In Column 2, we see that the individualist treatment (*Individualism*) results in a significant negative change in support among humanitarians, as indicated by the negative and significant coefficient of -0.973. Within the same group in Column 2, the egalitarian treatment (*Egalitarian*) results in a significant and positive change in support for healthcare reform, indicated by the significant and positive coefficient of 1.153. As I will discuss further in Chapter Four, I argue that this pattern of results, in which humanitarians are easily convinced by “cherished value” frames, is due to a weaker attachment to humanitarianism as a value among individuals. That is, it is easier to change humanitarians attitudes about issues because they are committed to a relatively weaker value than egalitarians or individualists.

Put another way, individuals care *less* about humanitarian values than they do those “cherished values” of egalitarianism and individualism. Therefore, those who hold the weaker value of humanitarianism are far more likely to be persuaded by other value appeals than those who hold the cherished values of individualism and egalitarianism to be most important. Indeed, results of the humanitarian subjects model in Table 3.2 shows this to be true – humanitarians sway in the breeze, bending to the will of other frame appeals, but do not respond to their “own” frame, despite its significantly higher rating by all groups on persuadability and believability.

Furthermore, these results strongly indicate that matching the value of the frame to the value of the individual is *not* the only key variable in explaining why a frame catches on in the

public and is a winning communication strategy for politicians. That is, instead of value-types requiring targeted messages, successful messages might work across value types.

Contrary to previous research (e.g. Feldman and Steenbergen 2001b; Shen and Edwards 2005), humanitarianism does not appear to be the strong, cross-cutting motivator that encourages support in government programs. Instead, results indicate that using the humanitarian message has no significant effects on those holding that value, *and* actually causes a backlash among those who hold the far stronger “cherished values” to be most important.

These results have implications for those making strategic communication decisions. Since it is not important that a frame “matches” an individual’s underlying values (e.g. Sniderman and Theriault 2004), Democratic politicians can use egalitarian messages for all voters, without fear of alienating their constituencies or those holding individualist or humanitarian values. Indeed, this is good news for politicians and strategic elites – previous attempts to target specific messages to pre-identified individuals have been exceptionally costly and only successful under very specific conditions (e.g. Clinton and Lapinski 2004; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Shea and Green 2007).

However, the reader will note that the party identification variable (*Party ID* - 5 *category*) reaches significance in all of the value groups. Additionally, Congressional elites and political pundits do not often classify people based on value types. Instead, they (and, often, we political scientists) talk about Americans in terms of political partisan identities. Thus, politicians may ask, “how will this play among Democrats and swing voters,” *not* how “egalitarians will react.” With this in mind, I next turn to analyzing treatment effect results by party ID, a key variable we know to be important throughout decades of political science research. I expect that party ID is part of the story of why frames are successful, but not the

motivator of the entire tale. Importantly for the Democratic Party, I expect that there are key constituencies with which the humanitarian frame particularly fails to resonate. This is further evidence that it is not, as some have argued, a value that can reach across the proverbial partisan aisle. With that in mind, I next examine how the humanitarian frame affects opinions among partisans.

3.4.3 The Effect of Partisanship on Frame Effects

One of the strongest variables in understanding how and why an individual holds a political opinion has traditionally been partisan identification (e.g. Abramowitz and Saunders 2005, 2006, but see Fiorina and Abrams 2010; Fiorina, et al. 2005). It is not surprising, therefore, that support for healthcare falls – like other social spending issues – neatly along partisan lines. However, I argue that values have an interactive but separate importance when trying to understand one’s political beliefs (e.g. Goren 2005), especially for those who are politically unaffiliated and those whose values conflict with their partisan identification. This is not to say that partisanship is unimportant to understanding the effects of values. Research indicates that individualism is a far stronger and more chronically accessible motivator for Republicans than egalitarianism (Barker 2005; Lakoff 2009; Shen and Edwards 2005).

Since Republicans are more responsive to individualist appeals (e.g. Barker 2005; Shen and Edwards 2005), I expect that partisanship creates limit of how much one can be convinced by messages using egalitarian values, such that Republicans are what Barker (2005) terms “suspicious” of appeals to equality. However, the literature is far less clear about the relationship between whether humanitarianism is strongest among Democrats or Republicans. Feldman and Steenbergen (2001a), for example, arguing that humanitarianism is a salient value

to *both* parties. By making help for others contingent on their relative worthiness, humanitarianism may reconcile the idea of helping others with the concept of a capitalist value structure, a strong organizing principle for the conservative world view (e.g. McClosky and Zaller 1984c)²⁰.

I contend that, since humanitarianism relies on empathy for others, it should have little to no effect on *either* Democrats *or* Republicans. Therefore, humanitarianism might be present in individuals, as Feldman and Steenbergen (2001a; 2001b) find, but it does *not* act as an exogenous motivator for either Democrats or Republicans²¹.

As for egalitarian messages, they appear to be far more strongly associated with the Democratic Party than the G.O.P. Indeed, policy outcomes that have been the trademark of sorts of the modern Democratic Party, such as the New Deal and the Civil Rights Bill (Miller and

²⁰ Others argue that the Republican Party used humanitarianism simply as a campaign tool in the past such as with the “compassionate conservatism” rhetoric of George W. Bush’s 2000 campaign (Kuypers, et al. 2003). The real focus of the G.O.P., they argue has always been individualist and *not* oriented towards helping others (e.g. Dowd 2012; Sullivan 2012; Wallis 2011) – even oriented towards *fear* of others, rather than a desire to help (Carter 2000).

²¹ Feldman and Steenbergen (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a, b; Steenbergen 1996) argue that humanitarianism is the strongest motivator for Democrats and Republicans alike. In their 2001a study, they show through observational analysis of American National Election Study survey results that humanitarianism allows Americans who place a strong emphasis on free market capitalism to embrace certain social welfare spending policies, without wholeheartedly accepting large-scale government intervention. However, because humanitarianism, egalitarianism, and individualism are treated as underlying preferences of the individual and are *not* manipulated with regards to their relative application to issues, it is unclear where ideology ends and values begin. That is, it is challenging in observational research to parse out the effects of ideology and partisanship on issue preferences *versus* the values of the individual. Additionally, it is important to note that Feldman and Steenbergen’s (2001a) paper uses data from a 1992 New York area study and from the 1996 ANES. Ideology is *not* important to predicting preferences towards social spending in 1992, but *is* in 1996. Just before the ANES 1996 study, welfare reform through the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 had been a major news issue and may have activated greater thinking among the public regarding social spending preferences²¹. Just as with the ACA, it is important to parse out this causal relationship, and determine whether long-term internal *values* or the salient and recent *partisan* messages surrounding a debate are more important to forming policy attitudes.

Lastly, measures for individualism, determined by support for limited government, are endogenous in their study with support for government spending, providing only a weak test for the relative effects of individualist values on social spending programs. That is, if one is asked to make judgments about their support for the government spending in general, these are likely to be highly correlated to support for means-tested programs such as welfare and healthcare. Thus, this does *not* show us the specific effects of the values, only the general, somewhat endogenous effects of holding a group of beliefs. By treating the values as *both* internal, pre-existing constructs as Feldman and Steenbergen (2001a) do, *and* as mutable and manipulable communication tools, I hope to separate the effects of a group of beliefs and the effects of a specific way of thinking about an issue. This will allow determination between how those pre-existing values and the values of the framing environment “meet” together to create attitude changes.

Schofield 2008), can be characterized as attempts at greater societal equality. The ideas of equalizing the playing field and of fairness have long been associated with a liberal worldview (Kluegel and Smith 1986; Miller and Schofield 2008; Verba and Nie 1972). Thus, I expect that Democrats should be far more likely to accept egalitarian messages than other subjects, all things considered.

Party ID and the emphasis of certain cherished ideas in one's internal value structure are likely to be highly correlated. Republicans generally tend to hold individualist values (Barker 2005; Shen and Edwards 2005; Triandis 1989), while Democrats often hold values of egalitarianism and fairness (Clawson and Clawson 1999; Frymer 2008). Thus I expect that Republicans and Democrats should be stronger supporters of these frames, and to score higher on the respective value scales. However, it is less clear from existing research whether humanitarianism is correlated with either party – indeed, this is one of the arguments authors like Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a use when maintaining that the humanitarian value is most successful because it does not suffer from a partisan reputation. That is, since the humanitarian value is not part of the key conflicts of the American ethos (McClosky and Zaller 1984c), they argue it is not “owned” by either side and therefore should be a strong organizing value for those wishing to garner support from *both* sides of the political spectrum.

I argue, though, that the space that humanitarianism occupies outside of the key American value conflicts makes it relatively *weaker* in political communication. In order to understand how and why this value results in a weaker political frame strategy, it is important to understand how both partisanship and pre-existing values create boundaries for how much one's opinion can “move” on an issue. That is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the predispositions an individual has may be able to limit the power that any frame can have over their resulting

attitudes. As such, perhaps the interaction between pre-existing values and frame strength is one in which beliefs and values create *boundaries* on the amount of opinion movement that can take place. If humanitarianism is a weaker pre-existing belief, it may result in fewer boundaries on how much opinions can move, as well as do less to change the opinions of those holding individualistic and egalitarian beliefs. In order to examine whether the data bear out this argument, I first wish to establish the clear and distinct difference between the effects of partisanship and those of value preferences on the attitudes of subjects. In Figure 3.1 below, I show that there are distinct differences in the support of individuals for healthcare reform, regardless of their treatment group in the experiment²². Differences in mean support between all groups are significant, with $p \leq 0.05$.

²² Figure 3.1 aggregates results across all treatment groups as well as the control group, for the purpose of showing differences between partisanship and value preferences. Another way to show this difference and to create a baseline of support among partisan value type groups would be to show means of support for these groups among the Control group only, so as to isolate pre-existing opinions from the treatment effects. However, given the relatively tight specifications of the value preference and partisan groups, this kind of reporting leaves many cells woefully under populated. For example, selecting humanitarian Democrats results in an $n=11$ among Control group participants. Since arithmetic means are highly subject to the effects of outliers, I seek to show results for larger groups. For this reason, I have chosen to report the aggregation, however the major trends in support change little, if at all, between the Control group-only and All Participants selection criteria, especially when medians are compared.

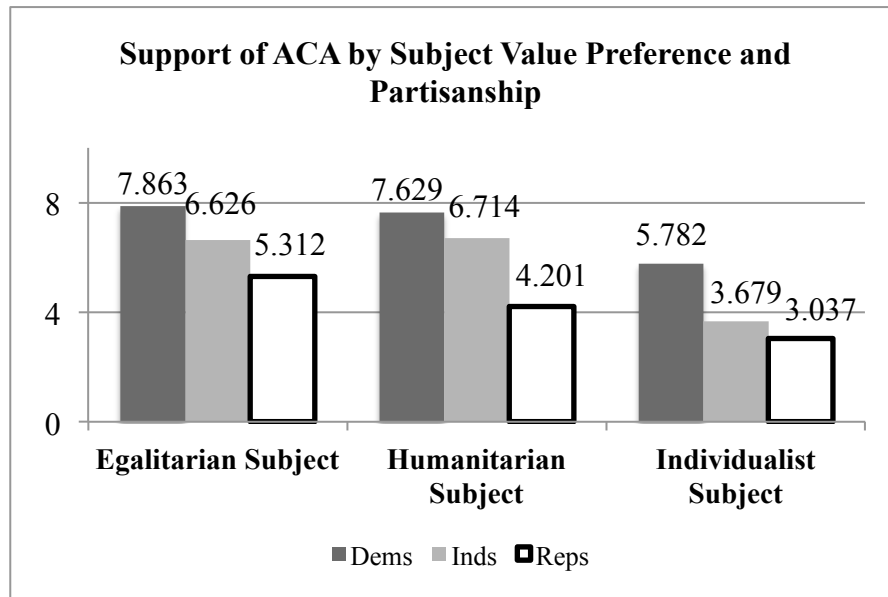


Figure 3.1: ‘Support for Healthcare Reform by Partisanship and Value Preferences, Among All Treatment and Control Groups’

As Figure 3.1 shows, knowing an individual’s partisanship does *not* provide the whole story predicting support for healthcare reform – instead, there are key differences by value type as well. Thus, while a Republican who holds strong individualist values supports healthcare reform at quite a low average rating of 3.037 (0-10 scale), that support rises to just below the threshold of supporting the bill when the Republican is an egalitarian, with an average support rating of 5.312. Similarly, we see that among those self-identifying as Independents, support for the bill is actually fairly high among those who are egalitarian or humanitarian (at 6.626 and 6.714 respectively), but quite low among those what are individualistic (3.679). This is likely due to the high correlation among those identifying as Independent between holding individualist

values and reporting on a follow-up party identification question that they think of themselves as more similar to Republicans than Democrats²³.

While this simple bar chart in Figure 3.1 shows that partisanship and values do not line up exactly, it does not break down results by frame treatment type or account for other variables in the model. Next, I turn to modeling the relationship between values and frames and the effects of the frame treatment on healthcare support. Results of this modeling are presented in Table 3.3 below.

Because research indicates that Democrats are most likely to hold egalitarian beliefs, while Republicans are most likely to hold individualistic beliefs, we may understand Democrat-egalitarians and Republican-individualists to be Non-Value-Conflicted individuals. That is, their core beliefs are in line with the fundamental principals of the party. Conversely, we can think of Individualist Democrats and Egalitarian Republicans as Value-Conflicted individuals, or individuals whose motivating beliefs do not “toe the party line.” In Table 3.3 below, these Value-Conflicted individuals are indicated by the single line box, while Non-Value-Conflicted are indicated by a double line box.

²³ Specifically, those who answered that they were Independents or “something else” saw a follow-up question, “If you think of yourself as Independent or something else, do you think of yourself as more similar to Republicans than Democrats, more similar to Democrats than Republicans, or equally similar to Republicans and Democrats?” (emphasis in the original). It is important to note that there is some controversy over what constitutes a political independent voter; one can include those who lean towards other parties, those who vote “purely” independent, or use some other means of selection. Here, I treat all of those who failed to identify themselves with one of the two major parties on the initial question as Independents, though they can also be thought of as “weak partisans.” Although those leaning towards one party or the other have been shown to vote similarly to partisans in two-party presidential elections (e.g. Keith, et al. 1992), other research shows that “leaners” far more closely resemble “pure Independents” than partisans on a host of behavioral and attitudinal measures (Donovan, et al. 2005; Donovan, et al. 2009; Greene 2002). Since I hypothesize that partisanship here would primarily act most strongly when subjects feel close to their party (e.g. Aldrich 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), those self-reporting as not identifying as a Democrat or Republican would, theoretically not have a “dog in the fight” (see also Sulitzeanu-Kenan, et al. nd.). These non-identifiers would also be theoretically less prone to value conflict, allowing them to feel comfortable holding, for example, strong egalitarian beliefs yet voting Republican in a given election. Conversely, those answering that they see themselves as an egalitarian *and* a Democrat would be less likely move their opinion or their vote in a given election. Therefore, treating weak partisans and “pure Independents” as one group is theoretically consistent with this model.

Table 3.3: ‘Effect of Value Frame Treatments on Support for Healthcare, by Partisanship of Individuals’

Explanatory Variables	Model								
	Egalitarian Subjects			Humanitarian Subjects			Individualist Subjects		
Treatment type	Dems	Inds	Reps	Dems	Inds	Rep	Dems	Inds	Reps
<i>Individualism</i>	-0.35 (0.34)	-0.62 (0.64)	-2.62 (2.21)	-1.32** (0.50)	-1.66** (0.48)	0.77 (1.16)	-0.20 (0.92)	-0.32 (0.86)	-0.36 (0.87)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	-0.97** (0.45)	-0.35 (0.62)	-4.75** (1.39)	0.35 (0.50)	-1.06 (0.65)	-1.06 (1.25)	0.22 (0.97)	-1.57** (0.70)	-0.96 (1.01)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	-0.81 (0.58)	-0.41 (0.64)	1.07** (1.75)	0.79* (0.44)	1.24** (0.40)	0.92 (1.04)	1.74 (1.09)	-1.10 (0.79)	-0.87 (0.79)
Treatment attributes									
<i>Positive</i>	0.70** (0.31)	-0.14 (0.45)	-0.37 (1.87)	0.50 (0.33)	0.23 (0.38)	2.10** (0.82)	-0.44 (0.71)	0.08 (0.53)	-2.00** (0.77)
Political attributes									
<i>Political Attention</i>	0.33** (0.15)	0.48* (0.18)	-0.36* (0.18)	0.47** (0.18)	0.36** (0.14)	0.10 (0.37)	0.27 (0.42)	-0.47* (0.24)	-0.02 (0.76)
Demographics									
<i>Male</i>	0.29 (0.28)	0.01 (0.51)	-0.41 (2.22)	0.01 (0.33)	-1.10** (0.41)	0.40 (0.82)	0.17 (0.75)	-0.02 (0.60)	-0.20 (0.66)
<i>Employed</i>	0.14 (0.32)	0.46 (0.48)	1.19 (1.78)	-0.39 (0.37)	-0.51 (0.42)	2.18** (1.09)	0.14 (0.81)	0.37 (0.56)	-1.92** (0.71)
<i>edu4</i>	0.43** (0.21)	0.18 (0.25)	0.69 (0.71)	0.18 (0.24)	0.44* (0.22)	-0.19 (0.67)	0.10 (0.42)	0.02 (0.31)	0.80 (0.56)
N	168	126	16	135	126	39	46	81	73
R-sq	0.15	0.10	0.35	0.23	0.34	0.36	0.13	0.14	0.20

Entries are robust OLS regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$ using two-tailed test of significance. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

I identify these Value-Conflicted subjects as well as political Independents as key constituencies for the Democrats and Republicans in Congress when trying to garner support or opposition to the ACA. In traditional terms, we can think of Non-Value-Conflicted individuals as part of the respective parties’ “bases,” and expect them to be very skeptical of any attempts to change their attitudes on healthcare. By contrast, the Value-Conflicted individuals and

Independents should be *the very people both parties need to convince* in order to garner greater support for their side.

With that classification in mind, we can see that the humanitarian frame significantly fails to convince these Value-Conflicted individuals or the Independents to move their support in a positive direction towards healthcare. This is clear from the coefficients for the humanitarian treatment (*Humanitarianism*) in Columns 1-3, 5, and 8-9. In fact, among the individuals affected by the humanitarian frame – Egalitarian Democrats (Column 1, -0.97), Egalitarian Republicans (Column 3, -4.75), and Individualist Independents (Column 8, -1.57) – the humanitarian message, based on the communications of Democratic Congressional leaders, resulted in a *negative* movement *away* from support of the healthcare reform bill, even when the frame is in favor of the bill. The greatest such effect occurs among the Value-Conflicted Egalitarian Republicans (Column -4.75), who may be considered the GOP identifiers with whom the Democrats had the greatest chance to change minds. Recall from Figure 3.1 that among all members of this group, mean support level at 5.312 was just under the threshold (5.5) past which they could be considered supporters of the bill. Among those receiving the humanitarian treatment, however, the model predicts support decreases to 0.562. The egalitarian message increases this support among the same group to 6.382²⁴. This has important implications for understanding why the fact that Democrats chose to talk about healthcare in terms of humanitarianism was so important.

This frame invoking equality, or egalitarian themes also successfully moved humanitarians towards supporting the bill, increasing support among Democrats by 0.79 points,

²⁴ The measure of value strength, *vstrong3* as well as an alternative measure of value strength were also included in all calculations, but did not add significantly to the explanatory power of the models or change any variable coefficients significantly. For the purposes of succinct modeling, these variables are excluded.

and Independents by 1.24 points. Thus, three key groups of supporters for the Democrats – Value-Conflicted Republicans, Democratic humanitarians, and Independent humanitarians all significantly increased their support for the ACA reforms if they read the egalitarian frame vignette. However, for the purposes of gaining *new* supporters, the egalitarian frame only made an important change in attitudes among the Value-Conflicted Republicans – the egalitarians. It moved them from an aggregated support *below* the threshold of support to one *above* this line. This may be considered support for hypotheses 3.1 (*H3.1*, which holds that egalitarian and individualist frames will have significant effects on the aggregate), but perhaps more importantly, it shows the real political consequences that can occur when a party chooses an emotive, relatively weaker frame, instead of a core “cherished value” frame with which to sell the public on their policies.

One notes that Non-Value-Conflicted subjects displayed few significant effects from the frames, with the exception being sort of revulsion away from the humanitarian message. The results provide strong support for the hypothesis that partisanship provides a kind of upper and lower bounds of opinion movement, such that Republicans who are Non-Value-Conflicted are unable to be moved by the values appeals themselves, while their Democratic Non-Value-Conflicted counterparts are only moved in opposition to the humanitarian message. Thus, the effects of value frames are not predicted solely on the partisanship or values of the individuals, but on their interaction and the boundaries they create on how greatly opinions may move.

In summary, the data show that humanitarian appeals are problematic for Democrats, causing them to lose out on “selling” their message to key constituencies. In addition, I show that partisanship is *not* the only aspect of the frame that makes the message successful in the public. Next, I evaluate two alternative explanations, and show the results of testing these

predictions with another issue area. Results indicate that these results are lasting and meaningful.

3.4.4 Alternative Explanations and Further Tests

Direction of the frame. Experimental research indicates that individuals are likely to react to the perceived positivity or negativity of a frame alone; that is, they may report more negative attitudes towards an issue simply because they have received a negatively-oriented stimulus, and conversely be positive in the face of positivity (e.g. Tversky and Kahneman 1974, 1981, 1987). Perhaps if, as research suggests, the mass public is simply predisposed to dislike governmental intervention or expansion (e.g. Cantril and Cantril 1999; Free and Cantril 1968; Jacoby 1994, 2000; Lock, et al. 1999; Shapiro and Young 1989), members of the public were similarly predisposed embraced the GOP's message against healthcare reform because it was a *negative* response to a proposed expansion of the government (e.g. Jacoby 2000). However, the direction of the frame is inconsistently significant in the value groups and cannot account entirely for the movement in opinions either in the aggregate or across models.

Source Cues. Repeated poll results regarding the ACA have shown that support for the bill fell strongly along party lines (e.g. Deane, et al. 2011; Langer 2010, 2012; Rasmussen 2012), leading one to speculate that attitudes towards the reform might be explained entirely by partisanship (e.g. Dionne 2012; Frakes 2012). Indeed, even as a battle rages on in the literature as to whether polarization is taking place (e.g. Abramowitz 2010a; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Fiorina and Abrams 2010), many issues like social spending and "culture war issues" appear to be solidly partisan (Fleisher and Bond 2000, 2001, 2004; Green and Guth 1989; Layman 2001). Partisanship has been found to affect individuals in ways previously unknown,

including their representation preferences (Barker and Carman 2012), and healthcare reform efforts have been no exception. Indeed, few Democrats or Republicans cross party lines in their opinions for or against reform (Oliver 2006, but see Morone and Jacobs 2005), especially among elites (Murray and Montgomery 2009).

It is challenging, however, to tease out the differences between the effects of a message that appeals to partisans because of their *values*, and the effects of the heuristic of party *labels* specifically. Research into public opinion strongly suggests that individuals often seek out cognitive shortcuts, or heuristics, in situations in which information is low or complicated to understand (Barker, et al. 2002; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Lupia 1994; Schaffner and Streb 2002; Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Heuristics like a group label, which give individuals information about the partisan orientation of an individual or idea, can particularly compensate for differences in information and awareness between individuals, often allowing them to overcome cognitive difficulties in decision-making (Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009; Rahn 1993; Schaffner and Streb 2002). That is, labeling an issue as one that Democrats or Republicans support can cause partisans to “recognize” which side of the issue they should be on, and align their preferences accordingly. If this is the true explanation for why Americans feel the way they do, for or against the ACA, we should see that party labels behind opinions matter far more than the values they invoke. As framing research suggests that the *source* of information is often of exceptional import (e.g. Druckman 2001c; Goren, et al. 2009; Hartman and Weber 2009), I focus on varying the source cues (*ttDEM*) among party labels to simulate the party label heuristic.

Approximately half of each treatment group read the key quote of the vignette as sourced from “a Democratic member of Congress,” while another half of each group saw it attributed to

“a Republican member of Congress.” The resulting dummy variable never reaches significance, even among the Control group. For conciseness, I therefore exclude from reported analyses²⁵.

Thus, it appears that neither party source cues nor direction of the frame can fully explain the results of these frame effects. Still, perhaps these effects are *only* applicable for the issue of healthcare. In order to evaluate this possibility, I conduct a second experiment on another issue area.

3.4.5 Applying the Model to Other Issues

As with the first experimental condition, I recruited subjects for this second experiment from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk), resulting in 273 MTurk workers participating in the study from June 14th, 2012 to June 16th, 2012. Of these, 22 did not complete the survey, resulting in n=251. The survey progressed exactly as in the healthcare issue experiment (see section 3.3.1 in this chapter). In the case of affirmative action, I ask respondents to rate their level of support for “the use of race in college admissions (6 categories)”²⁶. Results of this experiment are shown in Table 3.4 below²⁷.

²⁵ This is not to say that some frames may find success with the public simply because partisans recognize their side, or that heuristics like party labels are not an important part of individuals’ decision making. However it does not appear to be the most important or even one of the important aspects of attitudes about healthcare reform per se. To counteract the possibility that people simply did not believe that a Democrat was making an individualistic argument or that a Republican would argue in favor of egalitarian themes, I ran a simple crosstab analysis of reported persuadability (*persuade*) and believability of the frame (*believe*). No significant differences appeared.

²⁶ This issue was chosen as an additional test of whether the value effects were issue-specific because it was believable to frame the issue in terms of the three values (egalitarianism, individualism, and humanitarianism). Additionally, support for affirmative action does *not* rely on support for government spending, allowing for the test that value effects are specific to social spending issues.

²⁷ Additionally, I asked subjects to rate the appropriateness of using race in college admissions, resulting in a 7-item Likert scale of appropriateness. However, it became clear from factor loading analyses that individuals had highly disparate beliefs about “support” and “appropriateness.” That is, some individuals reported high support for using race in college admissions (*affirm*), but also rated it as “not very appropriate” (*approp*). This indicates that questions of appropriateness capture a very different concept, and the variable is not used.

Table 3.4: ‘Effect of Value Frame Treatments on Support for Affirmative Action, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model		
	a	b	c
Treatment type			
<i>Individualism</i>	-0.377 (0.500)	-0.439 (0.508)	-0.439 (0.508)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	-0.438 (0.483)	-0.441 (0.489)	-0.441 (0.489)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	-0.212 (0.517)	-0.261 (0.519)	-0.261 (0.519)
Treatment direction			
<i>Positive</i>	0.133 (0.352)	0.127 (0.354)	0.127 (0.354)
Value attributes			
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	-0.695** (0.240)	-	-
<i>Value - egalitarian</i>	-	-	1.507** (0.497)
<i>Value - humanitarian</i>	-	-0.358 (0.404)	1.149** (0.506)
<i>Value - individualism</i>	-	-1.507 (0.497)	-
Political attributes			
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	0.398** (0.134)	0.512** (0.135)	0.383** (0.138)
<i>Political Attention</i>	0.187 (0.141)	0.143 (0.149)	0.188 (0.142)
Demographics			
<i>white</i>	-1.507** (0.405)	-1.488** (0.402)	-1.484** (0.402)
N	246	246	246
R-sq	0.150	0.153	0.154

Entries are robust OLS regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

Table 3.4 shows that for the issue of affirmative action, the treatment frames appear to not have a significant effect on attitudes towards the policy. Instead, party identification (again, *Party ID - 5 category*, where 5=Strong Democrat and 1=Strong Republican) is significant and

positive, such that Democrats are (unsurprisingly) more supportive of affirmative action. In Model A (Column 1), the coefficient for the variable indicating the highest value preference of the individual (*Value - 3 category*, where 1=egalitarian, 2=humanitarian, 3=individualist) is significant. However, given that this is a categorical variable, the coefficient is not directly interpretable; instead it indicates that further models are necessary to tease out this relationship.

In order to do so, I create dummy variables *Value - individualism*, *Value - egalitarian*, and *Value - humanitarian* that indicate the highest value preference of the individual. In order to evaluate the effects of each, I omit one reference group per model. Since I am primarily concerned with modeling how humanitarians act, I do not use them as a reference group in any of the models. The resulting models (A and B, in Columns 2 and 3) show that those who have egalitarian beliefs display a 1.507 point higher support for affirmative action (0-10 scale), while individualists score 1.507 points lower²⁸. Put another way, since the average respondent reports their support level as 4.124, knowing that he or she is an egalitarian increases their predicted support level to around 5.631 – enough to take them over the threshold into support that exists at the 5.5 level. Conversely, knowing he or she is an individualist decreases predicted support to 2.617. Adding the dummy variable for race explains quite a bit of variance, with white respondents reporting support approximately 1.5 (approximate average across Columns 1, 2, and 3) lower than other respondents. These results are not particularly surprising, given that affirmative action is intended to help black Americans and may then engender negative perceptions of race (e.g. Gilens 1996, 2000). However, results do not allow us to say much about the treatment frames, which are remarkably unable to move opinions regarding affirmative

²⁸ In using one of the value types as the reference group (*Value - humanitarian* or *Value - individualism*) in each of the models, the regression coefficient reflects the difference in means between the two groups. For this reason, the coefficients are “mirror images” of each other, retaining the same absolute value no matter which group is the reference (Hardy 1993).

action. At the very least, we see that the humanitarian appeal does not suddenly jump forth as a winning communication strategy for those who wish to “sell” the public on the issue. This provides support for hypotheses 3.2 and 3.3 (*H3.2*, *H3.3*), which holds that the humanitarian frame will have no significant effects on opinions on affirmative action. However, because none of the other treatments are significant, we cannot reject the null for hypotheses 3.1, 3.4, and 3.6, which posit that the egalitarian and individualist frames will have some effects on humanitarians (*H3.1*, *H3.6*), and that egalitarian and individualists will react negatively to the humanitarian frame (*H3.4*). Additional analyses by value type show that despite the significant effects of values of the individuals themselves, the frame treatment types only approach significance and never fully realize it in separate analyses. The treatment types in the second issue area, though, prove to have quite other interesting consequences on information choices, which I explore further in Chapter Five.

For now, I have argued that humanitarianism is a weaker motivating value in strategic framing, and is a losing strategy for the Democrats. I argue that this is a weaker motivation strategy because humanitarianism relies on empathy (e.g. de Waal 2008; Decety 2005; Monroe 1996), and that sustaining empathy for others is often a challenge for even the most liberal individuals (e.g. Batson, et al. 2002; Monroe 1996). In addition, evaluating who is part of the “deserving” poor in this country often invokes negative stereotypes about African Americans (e.g. Gilens 2000; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Peffley, et al. 1997). I have also put forth a second argument – that humanitarians *themselves* are less committed to their values, and therefore far more malleable than egalitarians or individualists. One way I have shown this to take place is in changes to attitudes; egalitarians and individualists remained fairly impervious to other “cherished value” frames, but humanitarians changed their minds considerably after

exposure to these value frames. In Chapter Four, I delve further into testing this malleability, showing that humanitarians are less committed to their values when they encounter conflicting information. This is further evidence that those who hold cherished values of egalitarianism and individualism as most important to them are likely to “go home” in the face of other appeals, but that humanitarians are up for grabs for either party and for multiple value messages.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: OF TALL OAKS AND WILLOW TREES: HOW CHERISHED VALUES AFFECT COMMITMENT TO HUMANITARIANISM

In his 2012 book, writer E.J. Dionne recounts how former President Bill Clinton spoke of a penny as an illustration of the push-and-pull in society between equality and liberty. “That humble penny,” he would explain, “is an explicit declaration – one you can carry around in your pocket – that America is about both individual liberty and community obligation. These two commitments – to protect personal freedom and to find common ground – are the coin of our realm, the measure of our worth,” (Clinton 1996 in Dionne 2012: 71). As I argue in Chapter One, these arguments between egalitarian and individualistic principles can be thought of as “cherished” values,” whose power over citizens is strong and about which many of our most important political battles are fought.

Yet not all citizens are equally committed to this fight. Politics can also be classified as occurring along another axis defined by strength of beliefs, with some citizens having a strong commitment to one of these cherished values, and others appearing to be mere dilettantes. One’s position on this spectrum may be just as important as the values one holds; strong value commitments can protect us from outside arguments (Briñol, et al. 2004), and even make us avoid other sources of conflicting information altogether (e.g. Stroud 2011). I argue, though,

that not all values are made equal: some values engender *lower* levels of commitment in their followers.

In the preceding chapter, I have evaluated claims that humanitarian values undergird support for social spending programs (e.g. Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a, b) like healthcare, and also whether it might increase support for non-spending programs like affirmative action. While individuals may *report* that they are strongly motivated by the humanitarian value, data from two experiments show that it does *not* induce changes in support, at least not in the direction that supporters of the programs would like. In fact, its use can backfire on some key constituents; Democrats who are egalitarians, Republicans who are egalitarians, and Independents who are individualists all show *decreased* support for the healthcare reform bill when they hear the humanitarian argument.

In this chapter, I show that holding cherished values important to our society – egalitarianism and individualism – results in strong commitment to those beliefs, even in the face of opposing information. Holding humanitarian values, however, does not protect the individual from opposing information, and those who hold this value most strongly are also those most pliable in their commitment to this value. We can think of those who hold egalitarian and individualist values, then, as tall oaks, planted firmly in the ground and bending almost imperceptibly in the face of opposing winds. On the other hand, those who hold humanitarian values as most important to them can be thought of as willow trees, bending every which way in response to contradictory forces.

4.1 ATTITUDE AND PREFERENCE STRENGTH IN THE LITERATURE

While much of the early framing literature seems to focus on establishing the effects of strategic communication choices on individual attitudes (e.g. Cappella and Jamieson 1996; Druckman 2001b; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2001; Nelson and Kinder 1996), it now seems clear that there are certain attitudes that are *not* significantly affected in communications. In their classic works on attitude resistance to change, McGuire and Papageorgis (McGuire 1964; McGuire and Papageorgis 1961; Papageorgis and McGuire 1961) find that attitudes can be made immune to change when the individuals who hold them are exposed to arguments countering the other side. That is, presenting information to individuals that attacks an argument, then refuting that attack, leaves the individual inoculated from future attacks.

In their work on inoculation theory, McGuire and Papageorgis demonstrate that something as ordinary, for example, as tooth brushing is rarely attacked, and therefore rarely defended. For this reason, people are quite susceptible to suggestions to *not* brush their teeth, and did not defend the practice when questioned. However, when arguments *against* brushing one's teeth are presented and then refuted, people show far less susceptibility and far more resistance to change. Key to inoculation of beliefs, then, is the idea that arguments against it should be refuted. Inoculated beliefs become even more reinforced when they are refuted frequently – that is, if an individual hears several arguments refuting those who are against tooth brushing, he begins to generate strong rationales to support that belief (McGuire 1964; McGuire and Papageorgis 1961; Papageorgis and McGuire 1961). This focus on message “difficulty” seems particularly important, as attitude changes that involve high degrees of scrutiny have far

stronger and more lasting results than those that involve only low levels of scrutiny (e.g. Petty, et al. 1995b).

This inoculation effect is strong and has held up consistently across issue areas and time, helping protect, for example, teenagers from pressure to start smoking, and individuals from political attack mailers in campaigns (Pfau, et al. 1990; Pfau, et al. 1992, see Compton and Pfau 2005 for review). More recent work on what makes attitudes impervious to attack has focused on further refining our understanding of these properties of strength. Petty, et al. (1995a) define an attitude as strong if it persists over time, resists attack from outside forces, and can affect related behaviors of the individual holding it. Building on the theory that attitudes are strong when they are questioned and then confirmed, a large body of evidence reveals that the amount of *information* one evaluates helps determine preference strength (e.g. Davidson, et al. 1985; Petty, et al. 1995b). In their Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Petty and Cacioppo (Petty and Cacioppo 1986) explain that those attitudes that are strongly interconnected with an individual's cognitive and affective structures are most often those that have required him to really question and evaluate his stance, or *elaborate* upon the problem. The resulting strong beliefs are not only linked to ways of thinking about the world and problems, but also the way he or she evaluates new related attitudes and information (see also Eagly and Chaiken 1998; Petty, et al. 1995b). In such high elaboration situations in which these attitudes are highly connected to an individual's belief structure, these beliefs, then, are exceptionally resistant to change.

As I have argued, the cherished beliefs of egalitarianism and individualism values form the basis of nearly all of the important fights in American politics (Gans 1988; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Lane 1962; McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Verba and Orren 1985). Being part of these fights may form the kind of contestation environment that enables inoculation, or high

elaboration. That challenge President Clinton refers to, to protect “individual liberty and community obligation” is under constant scrutiny in politics and daily life, neatly characterizing most of the important political stances of the Democratic and Republican parties. It forms the basis of the dominant social ethos in America (e.g. McClosky and Zaller 1984c), and reduces comparatively abstract philosophical concepts of liberty and equality into predictable narratives that explain American life (e.g. Bar-Tal 2000: 137-150). Tannenbaum describes an ethos such as liberty and equality as, “[an] unwritten summary – of all the efforts, strivings, success, and failures of the past that make the present what it is,” (Tannenbaum 1945: 343). Indeed, the history of American policy reforms in nearly all areas speaks of this pull towards more egalitarian policies and the pushback of those with individualism in mind (e.g. Clawson and Clawson 1999; Davidson 1992; Frymer 2008; Green, et al. 1996; Schuman, et al. 1985; Skocpol 1995).

Worker’s compensation, for example, evolved as an “efficient and rational solution” to the problem of employers having the individualistic right to provide no compensation for workplace industrial accidents on one hand, and egalitarian attempts by the court to punish these companies, on the other. As Theda Skocpol describes in her historical analysis of American social policy, “[b]usinessmen wanted relief from high and unpredictable costs; workers wanted quicker and more adequate compensation; and reformers and the educated public wanted an end to inefficiencies and unfairness,” (1992: 292). However the resulting program went nowhere near as far as those in England and Germany in its generosity to workers, a concession to that commitment to “powerful capitalist” individualism that spikes American politics (296). “As matters turned out in the United States,” Skocpol sums up, “the vast majority of the state-level

workman's compensation laws passed during the Progressive Era would undercut rather than promote momentum towards additional forms of public social benefits," (296).

Today, the conflict between them manifests itself in disagreements about tax rates, the amount of power that should be given to organized workers, and, in the case of the 2010 healthcare debate, whether the government should tell people to carry insurance or face penalties. I argue that precisely *because of this constant conflict, beliefs about individualism and egalitarianism inoculate their holders from attempts to change their commitment to their values*, and are resistant to persuasion in multiple forms.

On the other hand, humanitarianism rarely engenders strong conflict in American society. It is a way of thinking of alleviating suffering in a way that does not try to address societal structures, requiring sustained empathy towards the aid recipient and a general evaluation of that recipient as *deserving* of aid (Monroe 1996). Importantly, though, it should rarely cause individuals to take controversial or even particularly strong stances that they have to defend from contrary arguments. Returning to Skocpol's case history (1992), we see that the key historical policy compromises, between individualists desiring little to no governmental intervention in capitalism and egalitarians who felt government could right long term injustices, were solved with programs that evaluated "deservingness" of their beneficiaries²⁹. New policies to help pensioners and veterans emphasized *contributions* to the programs, and established help only for those who had *earned* it (533).

²⁹ Skocpol offers considerable case history to argue that evaluations of governmental intervention were also highly wrapped up in feelings about public corruption and mishandling of money. The feared outcome, then, was that money and aid would go to those who were "undeserving" of it – politicians, cronies, and others who had not "earned" it. This understanding of *why* corruption and mishandling stymie support may explain why Feldman and Steenbergen (2001) find humanitarian support for public welfare is conditioned by trust in government.

By contrast, those in favor of egalitarian reforms seek to extend reforms to *all* individuals, in order to create a more level playing field (Arneson 2002). Feldman and Steenbergen (2001: 661) argue that, “a belief in equality does not have to flow from emotions such as empathy...humanitarianism should thus have a strong emotional component while egalitarianism should involve more cognitive processing and be more closely tied to other normative values.”

I argue that this is the key reason that the humanitarian frame was not successful in convincing individuals to support healthcare reform, showing this effect in two different survey experiments (see Chapter Three). Humanitarianism is a non-central belief; it does not organize attitudes and predict attitudes and behavior towards new stimuli the way that strong, interconnected beliefs that are the result of high elaboration and conflict do (e.g. Fazio 1995b; Petty, et al. 1995b; Petty and Krosnick 1995). However, knowing that humanitarianism is not a convincing value in general gives us only part of the picture.

4.2 VALUE CHANGE AND PERSUASION: HYPOTHESES

A fuller understanding of why this value is a weaker value in communication requires an evaluation of the strength of this belief *within* individuals. That is, do some values just *mean* more to individuals, and therefore change less? I argue that because individualism and egalitarianism are both key to the American ethos *and* in constant conflict with one another, they should display attributes of those values formed under high elaboration scenarios. That is, they should be resistant to change, relatively stable, and lead those who hold them to avoid those

things that undermine their values (e.g. Eagly and Chaiken 1995; Eaton and Visser 2008; Feldman 1988; Petty, et al. 1995b). However, humanitarianism, with its lack of connection to the American ethos and relatively weaker foundation on empathy, should display the opposite characteristics. That is, it should be relatively easy to change, less stable, and have no effect on whether an individual exposes his or herself to conflicting values. I focus on establishing this relative change and stability in this chapter, and discuss selective exposure effects in Chapter Five.

In order to evaluate the strength with which individuals hold their values, I conducted a post-test questionnaire of attitude strength, allowing me to compare how the values of individuals change in the face of opposing or confirming information. Like willow trees, humanitarians should bend away from their value commitments, moving towards the opposing arguments they receive, while individualists and egalitarians should resist change, remaining steadfastly “planted” in their original choices like a tall elm. More formally:

H4.1: Humanitarians will exhibit significantly increased support for egalitarianism (individualism) when they receive the egalitarian (individualist) frame.

H4.2: Humanitarians will exhibit significantly decreased support for individualism (egalitarianism) when they receive the egalitarian (individualist) frame.

Conversely, *H4.3: Individualists (egalitarians) will exhibit no significant decrease in their commitment to individualist/egalitarian statements when they receive any other frame.*

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, *H4.4: Humanitarians will exhibit significantly decreased commitment to humanitarian statements when they receive an individualist or egalitarian frame.*

4.3 VALUE CHANGE AND PERSUASION: MODELS AND EFFECTS

I test these hypotheses with post-treatment questions embedded in the healthcare survey experiment (see Chapter Three). All subjects answered an additional post-test after the experimental treatment, containing scales asking them to rate support for value items culled from the first section of the survey. Two items of each value “type” presented at Time 1 were converted to single 1-6 Likert scale items, and respondents were asked to rate their support for each statement³⁰. I then coded the value responses according to the value that was most highly favored by the individual, giving each subject a rating for the number of times they selected each value in the trade-off conditions at Time 1 (T1), and a value score after experimental treatment at

³⁰ An early pre-test (n=288) revealed that respondents needed very high incentive amounts to complete a second wave and were likely to do so at very different time intervals, making measurement of values at another date challenging. A second pre-test (n=647) showed that asking subjects to recomplete the entire battery of trade-off questions at the end of the survey caused unreliable answers and may have engendered survey fatigue. Therefore, the use of the same statements in the final study, this time with 5-option Likert support scales, was the preferable solution to measuring opinion change.

Time 2 (T2). I use these value scores at two times to show how values *change* when exposed to confirming or conflicting information.

Since I am primarily concerned with how that individual rates the values *relative* to the other values, I recalculate support for each value at T1 and T2 as a percentage of *all* of the support that the individual gave to all of the values. That is, for example,

$$\text{Humanitarian rating percentage}_{i2} = \text{humanitarian statement support} / (\text{humanitarian statement support} + \text{egalitarian statement support} + \text{individualist statement support})$$

This provides a standardization of scores between values within the individual *and* allows for comparison between times with the trade off values at T1; values at T1 were scored not on a Likert scale but as a count variable of all the times one chose that value relative to another. Using the count variables for each value choice, I standardize support for each value as a percentage:

$$\text{Humanitarian rating percentage}_{i1} = \# \text{ of humanitarian statement chosen} / (\# \text{ of humanitarian statements chosen} + \# \text{ of egalitarian statements chosen} + \# \text{ of individualist statements chosen})$$

This gives me a comparable measure of value change *within* an individual, relative to the other values that they choose. I am also interested in each person's ranking of value commitment *between* individuals; that is, I wish to know whether an individual's percentage of support given to a particular value is higher or lower than other individuals' ratings. With that in mind, I next

standardize the percentage variables for all values at both T1 and T2 by converting them to z-scores³¹. Change in value commitment, then, is calculated as:

$$(humanitarian\ rating\ \Delta) = (z\text{-score of humanitarian rating percentage}_{t2}) - (z\text{-score of humanitarian rating percentage}_{t1})$$

Tables 4.1-4.3 below shows the results of an OLS regression of the effects of treatment on changes in value support for each of the value types using these calculated variables. For each value change table, I show the model for all subjects in the first column, to establish which variables add significantly to explaining change in the dependent variable (Δ of each z-scored value). Since the value *type* of each individual (*Value - 3 category*) is a categorical variable (and therefore not directly interpretable), I break down results by each value type in the columns of each table. The constant for each equation is the standardized support for the selected value among the control group for each individual value type. I begin by showing the effect of each frame on changes in egalitarian support in Table 4.1 below.

³¹ The z-score procedure standardizes the scale of distributions, here, allowing comparison between individuals. It is computed as the observed score minus group mean, divided by the standard distribution, or $z = \frac{(x - \bar{x})}{s}$. Each resulting score reports how many standard deviations that particular observation is from the mean (see Larsen and Marx 2001). A z-score always has a standard deviation at or approaching 1, and a mean at or approaching 0. Note that since the dependent variable of change in values reported in the tables reflects the difference between two z-scores, it does *not* have a mean of 0 or standard deviation of 1.

Table 4.1: ‘Changes in Standardized Support for Egalitarian Value Statements by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model			
	All Subjects	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type				
<i>Individualism</i>	0.048 (0.075)	0.377** (0.115)	-0.285** (0.104)	0.082 (0.119)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	0.207** (0.075)	0.422** (0.107)	0.156 (0.113)	0.118 (0.119)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	0.780** (0.076)	0.737** (0.109)	1.147** (0.106)	0.170 (0.125)
Treatment direction				
<i>Positive</i>	0.115** (0.053)	0.041 (0.075)	0.176** (0.076)	0.103 (0.087)
Value attributes				
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	0.332** (0.037)	-	-	-
Political attributes				
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	0.065** (0.020)	0.011 (0.035)	0.107 (0.028)	0.081** (0.028)
<i>Political Attention</i>	-0.004 (0.023)	0.004 (0.035)	0.022 (0.031)	-0.043 (0.040)
Constant	-1.162** (0.163)	-1.075** (0.202)	-0.020** (0.175)	-0.251 (0.202)
N	790	310	300	180
R-sq	0.205	0.140	0.426	0.072

Entries are OLS regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

As seen in Table 4.1, egalitarian subjects’ support of egalitarianism is reinforced at virtually every turn, while humanitarians change their support of egalitarian statements easily. This change is indicated by the coefficients for treatment type dummies (*Individualism*, *Humanitarianism*, and *Egalitarian*) in both the egalitarian-only (Column 2) and humanitarian-only (Column 3) models. In the egalitarian-only model, treatment with the individualist frame (*Individualism*) results in a significant and positive increase in standardized percent support of

egalitarianism, with a coefficient of 0.377. Exposure to the humanitarian frame (*Humanitarianism*) also results in increased standardized support from T1 to T2, with a significant and positive coefficient of 0.422. The strongest reinforcement of egalitarian beliefs, unsurprisingly, takes place when egalitarians read an egalitarian frame about healthcare reform (*Egalitarian*), with a significant and positive change coefficient of 0.737. These changes are significant and are not predicted by any additional control variables. These results are consistent with Hypothesis 4.3, which predicts that individualists and egalitarians should display no significant decrease in support for their values no matter the frame type.

Humanitarians, by contrast, move significantly away from support for egalitarian statements when they read an individualist frame (*Individualism*), with a negative and significant coefficient of -0.285. Consistent with the idea that egalitarian and individualist values are in constant conflict in American politics (e.g. Bar-Tal 2000; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001b; McClosky and Zaller 1984c), exposure each of these respective “cherished values” should cause those who *can* change their values to move *away* from the other. The humanitarian frame (*Humanitarianism*) has no effect on support for egalitarian statements, but the egalitarian frame (*Egalitarian*) does result in significant movement towards the statements, indicated by the coefficient of 1.147. The pattern of change present among humanitarians is evidence for my argument that *those who hold this value are more malleable in their commitment to it, because it is not a value that has been subject to high elaboration*. Because they are more malleable, they move towards egalitarianism when they receive this argument, and away from egalitarianism when they read an individualist frame. This evidence is entirely consistent with Hypotheses 4.1 and 4.2, which predict such a pattern.

Those whose values *have* been subject to high elaboration through political conflict show strong commitment to their values – in fact, nothing is able to make individualists (Column 4) move away from or towards support for egalitarianism except party identification (*Party ID - 5 category*). The positive and significant coefficient for *Party ID - 5 category* (0.081) indicates that those who are individualists and lean towards the Democratic Party are likely to move towards egalitarian values slightly after exposure to any frame. Perhaps these individuals are more conflicted than their Republican individualist brethren, but even this significant change is quite minimal compared to how much humanitarians sway when presented with “cherished value” arguments. This variable is ordinal and therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the size of effects.

Next, I examine how each of the value groups changes their support for individualist statements when exposed to the three value treatments. I argue that individualists will not significantly decrease their support for individualism no matter what the treatment, while humanitarians will move towards individualism when they receive an individualist frame and away from it with exposure to an egalitarian frame. I expect that egalitarians should exhibit no movement towards individualism, since they are strongly committed to their value. Table 4.2 below shows results of the change in standardized support for individualism from T1 to T2 by value type of the individual and tests these arguments.

Table 4.2: ‘Changes in Standardized Support for Individualist Value Statements by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model			
	All Subjects	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type				
<i>Individualism</i>	0.415** (0.073)	-0.240** (0.109)	1.144** (0.096)	0.107 (0.140)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	-0.109 (0.073)	-0.206** (0.102)	-0.092 (0.104)	0.096 (0.141)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	-0.168** (0.072)	-0.266** (0.103)	-0.241** (0.071)	0.105 (0.147)
Treatment direction				
<i>Positive</i>	-0.003 (0.051)	0.081 (0.072)	-0.022 (0.071)	-0.040 (0.103)
Value attributes				
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	-0.214** (0.036)	-	-	-
Political attributes				
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	-0.008 (0.019)	-0.023 (0.034)	0.068** (0.025)	-0.106** (0.047)
<i>Political Attention</i>	0.029 (0.022)	-0.023 (0.034)	0.030 (0.028)	0.106** (0.050)
Constant	0.292* (0.157)	0.399** (0.193)	0.399** (0.162)	-0.485* (0.239)
N	790	310	300	180
R-sq	0.128	0.031	0.484	0.118

Entries are OLS regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

The results in Table 4.2 above again show clear support for the argument that humanitarians bend towards strong “cherished values,” while individualist and egalitarians are instead strongly committed to their values. Support for the former argument, that humanitarians will move significantly towards support for the value frame they receive and away from its opposing value (Hypotheses 4.1 and 4.2), is indicated by the significant and positive coefficient of 1.144 for humanitarians (Column 3) receiving the individualist frame (*Individualism*), and by

the significant and negative coefficient of -0.241 for humanitarians receiving the egalitarian frame (*Egalitarian*). That is, as predicted by Hypotheses 4.1 and 4.2, humanitarians move *towards* individualism when they receive an individualism frame, and *away* when they receive an egalitarian frame. This is an indication that humanitarians have far less of a commitment to their beliefs. The party identification of humanitarians also has a significant and positive coefficient of 0.068 (*Party ID - 5 category*, where 1=Strong Republican, 5=Strong Democrat). This indicates that those humanitarians who identify as farther away from the Republican Party are more likely to move *towards* greater levels of individualism at T2. Again, caution should be taken when interpreting ordinal, non-interval scales such as party identification, but I suspect that those who are farther from the Republican Party may have farther they can “move” from T1 to T2. That is, perhaps they are more conflicted individuals but move closer to individualism after examining other value arguments.

As predicted by Hypothesis 4.3, egalitarians (Column 2) and individualists (Column 4) stay strongly committed to their own beliefs. In fact, as indicated by the significant and negative coefficients among egalitarians for the treatment dummies (*Individualism*, *Humanitarianism*, and *Egalitarian*), egalitarians actually become *less* supportive of individualist value statements *no matter what the treatment* and even with the inclusion of several control variables, as compared to the control group of egalitarians. Individualists remain steadfast to their values, moving away from individualist statements only if they political identify more strongly with Democrats than Republicans. This is indicated by the significant and negative coefficient of -0.106 for the party identification variable (*Party ID - 5 category*). Additionally, those individualists who pay more attention to politics (*Political Attention*, where 1=Never and 5=Always) are slightly more likely

to report higher levels of individualism at T2, as indicated by the positive and significant coefficient of 0.106.

In all, we see that individualists and egalitarians remain *strongly* committed to their own values, even in the face of contradictory value “stories.” Humanitarians, by contrast, appear to be strongly swayed by these strong value frames, and move towards the direction of the cherished value they receive while rejecting its opposing cherished value. The results of Tables 4.1 and 4.2 appear to be strong evidence in favor of Hypotheses 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, holding that individualist and egalitarians are resistant to persuasion and value change, while humanitarians are not. However, this is not enough evidence that humanitarianism is a value engendering less commitment. I wish to further show that, unlike individualists and egalitarians, those holding humanitarianism as their key value actually sway in their commitment to their *own* deeply held values. In order to show this, I next examine how each of the value types change their support for humanitarian values in the face of treatment with each of the frames. I argue that humanitarians should display far less stability in their support of humanitarian statements from T1 to T2 than their individualist and egalitarian peers. The results of the OLS regressions testing this proposition are displayed in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: ‘Changes in Standardized Support for Humanitarian Value Statements by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model			
	All Subjects	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type				
<i>Individualism</i>	-0.698** (0.107)	-0.173 (0.151)	-1.406** (0.123)	-0.241 (0.179)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	-0.093 (0.107)	-0.269* (0.140)	-0.063 (0.134)	-0.274 (0.180)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	-0.680** (0.107)	-0.574** (0.143)	-1.111** (0.125)	-0.322* (0.188)
Treatment direction				
<i>Positive</i>	-0.135* (0.074)	-0.172* (0.099)	0.177* (0.091)	0.080 (0.131)
Value attributes				
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	-0.374** (0.052)	-	-	-
Political attributes				
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	-0.016 (0.028)	0.048 (0.046)	-0.039 (0.033)	0.106 (0.043)
<i>Political Attention</i>	-0.033 (0.032)	0.004 (0.046)	-0.079** (0.037)	-0.102* (0.060)
Constant	1.336** (0.229)	0.783** (0.266)	0.420** (0.208)	0.517* (0.305)
N	790	310	300	180
R-sq	0.149	0.070	0.405	0.081

Entries are OLS regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

The results of Table 4.3 show a clear pattern in which humanitarians have significantly less support for humanitarian statements at T2 when they receive an individualist or egalitarian frame. This relationship is evident because of the significant and negative coefficients of humanitarians receiving the individualist frame (-1.406, Column 3) and the egalitarian frame (-1.111, Column 3). This pattern is entirely consistent with my argument that humanitarian beliefs are not motivating to most individuals – *even those who hold this value most closely, relative to*

the other values. It is also strong support for Hypothesis 4.4, which predicts that we should see humanitarians displaying less commitment to their humanitarian beliefs at T2 (indicated by significant and negative coefficients) after treatment with the individualist or egalitarian frames.

Those who hold individualist or egalitarian beliefs act in accordance with Hypotheses 4.2 and 4.3, remaining steadfast to support of their own beliefs relative to the other values no matter what the treatment exposure. In fact, just like their humanitarian brethren, egalitarians and individualists actually significant lose support for humanitarian statements when they are exposed to the egalitarian treatment. This is indicated by the negative and significant coefficients for egalitarians receiving egalitarian treatment (-0.172, Column 2) and for individualists getting the egalitarian message (-0.322, Column 4). That is, *all* value types, including egalitarians and humanitarians, lose support for humanitarian values when they hear an egalitarian argument.

It is important to note that these results are clear and significant *even when controlling for partisanship*, which the literature shows is a key variables in understanding a host of attributes about individuals (e.g. Box-Steffensmeier, et al. 1998; Dawes and Fowler 2009; Fiorina 1981; Green and Palmquist 1994; Schickler and Green 1997). And while we do see that those who pay more attention to politics may also be less susceptible to attempts to change their beliefs (evident in the coefficients of -0.079 in Column 3 and -0.102 in Column 4), political attentiveness is still not able to dampen the significance of being exposed to strong messages. Lastly, these results are not explained by differences in the believability or persuadability of the arguments themselves. As I show in Chapter Four, the humanitarian frame is actually rated as slightly, but significantly, more persuadable than the egalitarian and individualist argument. This higher rating of the frame and high report of humanitarian support is fully consistent with Feldman and

Steenbergen's (2001a, 2001b) argument that humanitarianism undergirds support for social programs. However, as I have shown, exposure to humanitarian messages does *not* engender support for government programs *or* commitment to values. This has important consequences for those trying to sell their programs to the public.

The results of Table 4.3 are perhaps most salient to understanding the consequences of choosing the “wrong” frame of humanitarianism to sell programs like healthcare to the public. If we believe that humanitarianism is indeed the basis of support for the welfare and social spending programs in the U.S. (e.g. Feldman and Steenbergen 2001b) and a “bridging value” for Democrats and Republicans, we might expect that a frame invoking this value would activate latent preferences for helping others. As I show in Chapter Three, the humanitarian frame has no such effect on attitudes – among humanitarians its effects are insignificant, and among individualists and egalitarians, it actually *decreases* support for healthcare reform. In this chapter, I have approached the question of whether humanitarianism is indeed a bridging value from another angle, examining the relative strength of the value. Perhaps humanitarianism is successful in changing people's commitment to their values, making them come closer to empathy for others when they hear a message invoking the neediness of individuals. Results from the models in Tables 4.1, 4.2, and especially 4.3 tell a different story. Humanitarians are *not* wedded to their beliefs, and are “up for grabs” when lured by other value stories. I argue malleability takes place because humanitarianism is not a belief subject to the kind of high elaboration that takes place when a value is under constant attack from the other side. The results of these analyses further strengthen the argument that Democrats would be better served to invoke egalitarian themes of equality – since humanitarians are “up for grabs” in a way that

egalitarians are not, they can be swayed to “become” egalitarian through exposure to the proper frames³².

In this chapter, I have established that those holding the value of humanitarianism are far less likely to be wedded to their beliefs than egalitarians and individualists. The results of my experiment indicate that, when treated with a frame emphasizing egalitarianism or individualism, those holding the value of humanitarianism are likely to bend towards these other, more cherished values. While causing one to waver in commitment to their beliefs is certainly an important function of a strong frame, I argue that even further effects result from the most successful of frames. In Chapter Five, I discuss how there are also important downstream effects of the relatively weaker humanitarian frame, one of which is that it does not affect the kind of information one prefers the way cherished value frames do.

³² Individualists remain strongly wedded to their beliefs, and are probably not a fertile ground for new supporters of Democratic policies. For more, see Chapter Three, section 4.3.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: THE EFFECTS OF VALUE FRAMES ON INFORMATION PREFERENCES

The subtle use of language in the media, or issue framing, can shape the story and tell the news consumer what to think about, as well as the framework with which to think about it. As McLeod, et al. 1994, describe, “at least early in the history of an issue, a reporter or editor may have considerable latitude to choose among several frame packages; later the options narrow as elites take positions and media content begins to show consensus in choosing particular frames” (134). I have argued that the relative *strength* of a frame is a key part of understanding why and how certain frames “stick” when talking about an issue. And I posit that one of the key ways this strength is gained is by emphasizing core, “cherished values” - egalitarianism and individualism - in talking about an issue. In previous chapters, I have shown that the humanitarian value frames are unable to connect with the public because they cannot change attitudes, testing this relationship in two issue areas. Next, I demonstrated that the humanitarian values themselves are more malleable, as support for humanitarianism decreases, even among those holding the value most strongly, when individuals are presented with cherished value frames. In this chapter, I aim to show another key difference between cherished value frames and humanitarian frames – their effects on preferences for *more information*. Using my original experiment on attitudes towards healthcare reform (n=810) and offering subjects magazine covers from which to choose, I

demonstrate that the strong frames of egalitarianism and individualism cause most subjects to gravitate towards information consistent with the frame. However, exposure to the humanitarian frame does not engender a similar response. In addition, I show that humanitarians themselves are more likely to think the healthcare issue is “about” equality when they hear an egalitarian argument. This has implications for understanding why, as an issue evolves in the media, elite communication strategy can matter far beyond the reach of one press release.

When people are given the choice to consume only the messages with which they agree, I argue that they do so at a significantly higher rate if they have been exposed to reinforcing frames³³. That is, when individuals are exposed to the "cherished value" frames with which they agree, they "go home" (Sniderman and Theriault 2004) with the value they came with. This is important because this path from pre-existing belief, frame exposure, to choosing reinforcing information can create a feedback loop of sorts (e.g. Slater 2007). And as new research shows, these decisions can have important consequences and persevere, even if elites attempt to “re-frame” the issue. As Druckman, Fein, and Leeper (2012: 431) explain,

“Messages do not decay, and instead, the first frame put forth dominates opinion. This finding suggests that, when individuals have even minimal interest in obtaining information about an issue, elites who go first are advantaged and primacy prevails. We further show that these primacy effects are substantively equal to what occurs if the side that goes first gets to repeat its message over time. As we explain, the results suggest that opinion stability may often reflect biased information seeking.”

³³ This tendency to select to consume only that information with which one already agrees is also known as “selective exposure.” I acknowledge that there are considerable reasons to question how much this selective exposure actually takes place in the public. For example, Arceneaux and colleagues show through experimental investigation that, even though exposure to contrary ideological views causes oppositional hostility, the high number of choices available in today’s media environment may moderate these effects (Arceneaux, et al. 2012; see also Arceneaux and Johnson 2010; Prior 2013). However, if even *some* selective exposure takes place, and that selection can be manipulated by exposure to strong value frames, this can have important consequences for understanding the effects of media exposure in America.

Humanitarians, instead, act like we would expect if the "syringe" hypothesis of media effects were correct, in which the media can directly affect individuals' beliefs (e.g. Lasswell 1948). That is, when they are exposed to frames emphasizing the cherished values, I expect that they will be moved to select the kind of information emphasized in that frame. In this way, I show that humanitarians are up-for-grabs in the long term - not only can strategic framing decisions affect individuals' opinions about one short-term issue, but it may further affect the kind of information they prefer to read downstream. This could have important implications for Democrats and Republicans attempting to control the message about an issue - while the right cherished value message will reinforce beliefs among those in the egalitarian and individualist camp, the humanitarians may gravitate towards the camp of whoever has the strongest message and stay there.

5.1 FRAMING AND INFORMATION SELECTION IN THE LITERATURE

Plentiful research on the media shows that the media are not, generally, capable of changing people's political beliefs outright. The study of media effects on public opinion has come far in recent years, progressing far past the hypothesized "hypodermic needle effect" associated with Lasswell (1948). Instead of holding that the media told people exactly what to think, a field starting with Lazarsfeld, et al. (1948) argued that only limited effects could come out of exposure to the news media (e.g. Hovland, et al. 1949). Today, media effects are understood to be limited but potentially potent – exposure to media messages does not appear capable of radically changing an individual's partisan orientation from, say, Democrat to

Republican (e.g. Green, et al. 2002; Krosnick and Miller 1996), but it *does* appear to reinforce and subtly tweak existing beliefs (Barker 2002; Iyengar and McGrady 2007; Jamieson and Cappella 2008).

In recent years, especially since the introduction of widespread cable television, increased segmentation of the market, or “narrowcasting,” has occurred, allowing individuals to choose to read and hear only those things with which they already agree, which in turn may have effects on beliefs (e.g. Barker 2002; Baum 2003; Prior 2005; Stroud 2011)³⁴. This indicates a narrowcasting cycle of sorts, in which people seek confirmatory information, which then further confirms their beliefs (Slater 2007). Importantly, these confirmatory sources often ridicule or dispute the “other side,” (Jamieson and Cappella 2008; Jones 2002; Mendelsohn and Nadeau 1996; Sobieraj and Berry 2011) providing the kind of high elaboration environment that may further inoculate beliefs from attacks.

Strong frames may play an important role in these narrowcasting choices by individuals. Festinger’s (1957) classic theory of cognitive dissonance holds that people selectively expose themselves to those things with which they most agree as the primary way of reducing their exposure to dissonant, or disagreeing, information (see also Zillman and Bryant 1985). As Berelson and Steiner (1964) explain, “people tend to see and hear communications that are favorable or congenial to their predispositions; they are more likely to see and hear congenial communications than neutral or hostile ones,” (in Sears and Freedman 1967: 196). Some research has focused on how people reducing dissonance because of strong and unchanging prior

³⁴ Though these increased choices may also allow some individuals to avoid news altogether and gravitate instead to entertainment (Arceneaux and Johnson 2010), the effects could still be strong if they are limited to influential citizens who tell others in their network more about politics (e.g. Huckfeldt, et al. 1995; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Huckfeldt, et al. 2000). And as Druckman, et al. 2012 show, effects of frames may persist *even* when individuals are given free reign to search for whatever information they like.

attributes – party identification, race, age, and other demographics (e.g. Stroud 2011). A growing body of evidence indicates that even manipulable attributes such as the kind of framed story an individual receives can affect the preferences he or she has for information (e.g. Fischer, et al. 2008; Zillman and Bryant 1985). What seems clear is that the ability of a message to affect selective exposure to information is highest among those messages that are convincing and strong (see Smith, et al. 2008 for review).

5.2 DOWNSTREAM INFORMATION PREFERENCE EFFECTS OF VALUE FRAMING: HYPOTHESES

I argue that there should be observable differences between the ability of frame messages to affect the *kind* of information that individuals select. Specifically, I assert that messages that are *most potent* should result in correspondingly *strongest* effects on individuals' information preferences. This has important implications for understanding why strong frames matter; if “cherished value” frames of individualism and egalitarianism, to which people show a strong value commitment, can not only affect attitudes about an issue but also the kind of information one subsequently prefers, this explains why these frames are better communication choices for elites. Those who hear these strong frames may become particularly attuned to its particular message, and tune out or reject outright any other attempts to frame the issue in a different way. More formally,

H5.1: Subjects who receive the egalitarian (individualist) frame should display a higher propensity to choose more egalitarian (individualist) information.

On the other hand, those messages that are *least potent* should result in the *weakest* effects on information preferences. Throughout this project, I have argued that humanitarianism is a weaker value with which to frame social spending issues in America, largely because it is not part of the core ethos that encapsulates all major political conflicts – egalitarianism vs. individualism (e.g. Carlisle and Smith 2005; Feldman 1982; Gans 1988; Jones 2002; Knowles, et al. 2009; McCarty, et al. 2005; McClosky and Zaller 1984c; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba and Orren 1985). Instead, humanitarianism relies on sustained empathy for one’s fellow man, *not* hard-fought beliefs about how the world should be structured. As such, I have shown that humanitarian arguments do *not* cause changes in attitudes towards two social issue areas (affirmative action and healthcare) and that the value itself is more malleable and less likely to engender strong commitment. In this last step of evaluating how issues are framed in the public area, I show that humanitarian arguments do *not* cause preferences for *more* humanitarian information. More formally,

H5.2: Individuals who receive the humanitarian treatment will not show a significant increase in their likelihood to choose more humanitarian information.

In order to show how the different value frames affect information preferences, I next turn to the original healthcare frame (n=810) and affirmative action (n=210) experiments explained in Chapter Four, and present new analyses.

5.3 DOWNSTREAM INFORMATION PREFERENCE EFFECTS OF VALUE FRAMING: METHODS AND ANALYSES

5.3.1 Selective Exposure Measurement

In her 2011 book, Natalie Stroud finds through a series of observational and experimental investigations that individuals make decisions about the kind of news they want to consume based on their partisan beliefs. She simulates the information environment with an innovative experimental design, telling subjects they must sit in a waiting room until the experiment begins, but actually conducting the study by observing which magazines they peruse while waiting. After gathering demographic information on subjects, she asks them to select a free subscription to one or more of the magazines they read. Stroud finds that Democrats are far more likely to select left-leaning publications, while their Republican counterparts select rightward leaning magazines. Though this experiment is both innovative and strengthens the argument that individuals select information that confirms their beliefs, it does suffer from some design issues – namely, because the magazines are actual offerings that would be found on a newsstand, they differ not only in partisan orientation, but also in story content, frame emphasis, graphic design, and other important elements. Thus, it is unclear whether individuals gravitate towards news choices because these sources confirm his or her beliefs or because of punchier graphics, more successful frames, or simply more interesting stories. While I am focused on establishing how values, rather than partisan attachments, affect news selections, I suspect that Stroud is correct in inferring from her experiment that people *are* making the kind of news choices that *confirm* their pre-existing beliefs. In order to narrow down the possible influences, however, I utilize an experimental design that controls aspects of graphics, story content, and news source, and *only*

varies the content, and the expressed values, of the headlines. While I do not have the benefit of recreating a waiting room (and an innocuous observer recording its occupants' choices), I argue that the ability to control both treatment type and the magazine attributes – and thus pinpoint effects – outweighs any desire for greater external validity.

In order to show the effects of the value frame treatments on selective exposure choices, I gave subjects two chances to select a magazine cover out of four possible choices, specifically asking, “Which magazine cover seems most interesting to you?” In order to minimize any effects from perceived bias of the publication and hone in just on the effects of value frames on further information preferences, I selected *Newsweek* as the publication from which subjects could select covers. A graphic designer manipulated these magazine covers such that all of the text choices were nearly identical in look, density, and size³⁵. Each of the covers had headlines emphasizing, respectively, the individualist, humanitarian, egalitarian, and control (value-less) healthcare or affirmative action frame messages. For example, in the healthcare experiment (n=810), the egalitarian magazine cover choice stated, “Healthcare Reform: Will It Equalize Differences Between Rich and Poor in America?” The humanitarian cover stated, “Healthcare Reform: Will it Help Disadvantaged People in America?”, while the individualist cover read, “Healthcare Reform: Will it Discourage Personal Responsibility for Americans?” The control condition cover read, “Healthcare Reform: What Changes Will it Make for Healthcare in America?” All choices were presented in random order on one screen to participants.

In the affirmative action experiment (n= 250), the egalitarian magazine cover choice stated, “Affirmative Action: Does it Equalize the Playing Field for Minorities?” The

³⁵ For exact wording and graphics, see Appendix C.

humanitarian cover read, “Affirmative Action: What Can it Do to Help Poor Minorities?”, while the individualist cover asked, “Affirmative Action: Does it Help Minorities Help Themselves?” The control condition read, “Affirmative Action: What Does it Do for Minorities?” Subjects could select any of the four magazine covers, and could select any headline up to twice³⁶. Since each individual has the opportunity to select a magazine cover up to twice, I code the resulting choices as ordinal variables reflecting the number of times an individual selected each of the magazine covers.

Emag3=# times egalitarian magazine cover selected (0-2 times)

Hmag3=# times humanitarian magazine cover selected (0-2 times)

Imag3=# times individualist magazine cover selected (0-2 times)

Cmag3=# times control magazine cover selected (0-2 times)

All models use the Control treatment condition as the reference group, and the number of times the control magazine was selected (*cmag3*) as the base category in direct comparison.

³⁶ I acknowledge that individuals will rarely, if ever, encounter this kind of limited-choice environment in which they must select from four nearly identical magazines, say, at a doctor’s office. However, this choice environment *does* approximate the way that marketers ask sampled members of the public to choose between such things as entertainment magazine covers, packaging designs, movie trailer clips, and alternative endings of television shows and movies (Dahan and Srinivasan 2000; Feinberg, et al. 2013; Feit, et al. 2010; Noble 2011). The results of these marketing choices often result in entirely different product results, and are thus important for those business professionals deciding between using several different strategies (Zikmund, et al. 2010). Even political campaigns use focus groups and other marketing research strategies when deciding between commercials and campaign messages (Bowler and Farrell 1992; Dulio 2004; Hollihan 2001; Nimmo 2001; Thurber and Nelson 2000). For these reasons, I argue that this choice environment is key to understanding why Democrats need to use egalitarian language to encourage support for their legislative “products.” Furthermore, current research that simulates a more open choice environment finds that frame effects exist largely in the same way as in a “captive” choice environment, except that early frames may actually have an inoculating effect against further frames (Druckman, et al. 2012)

5.3.2 Effects of Healthcare Frames on Information Choices

First, I test hypothesis H5.1, which posits that exposure to the egalitarian and individualist frames should, all things considered, result in a higher propensity to select “matching” information. I show the results of frame exposure in the healthcare frame experiment first. Since the dependent variables take the form of three ordered categories of choice, I use ordered logit regression to show the differences in propensity to select egalitarian information between treatment groups, including controls³⁷. In Table 5.1 below, the dependent variable is *emag3*, which reflects zero, one, or two selections of the egalitarian magazine covers. I expect that those who receive the egalitarian treatment should show the greatest propensity to select egalitarian information. That is, if an individual reads the egalitarian argument, he or she should be more likely to select the cover headline that asks, “Healthcare: Will it Equalize Differences Between Rich and Poor in America?”³⁸

³⁷ As a robustness check, I also tested the relationship between receiving the frame and information preferences for all of the models and variables shown in these Tables 5.1-5.7 using ordinary least squares regression. When the dependent variable has discrete, ordered categories, OLS regression may tend to underestimate the effects of the independent variables and may inflate standard errors; that is, the model fundamentally loses efficiency. All of the theoretically important variables that are shown to be significant in the ordered logit regressions remain significant, though in some cases their predictive power is considerably diminished. This is likely due to the nature of the dependent variable and its unsuitability for the OLS regression. For more about the use of OLS as a robustness check and the differences between the models in ordinal variable regression, see Baker, et al. 2010; Greene 2007; Lu 1999).

³⁸ Screenshots of the magazine covers are available in Appendix C.

Table 5.1: ‘Selection of Egalitarian Healthcare Information by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model			
	All Subjects	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type				
<i>Individualism</i>	0.317 (0.201)	0.847** (0.351)	-0.026 (0.311)	-0.138 (0.503)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	0.582** (0.202)	0.724** (0.321)	1.290** (0.378)	0.201 (0.483)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	1.604** (0.208)	2.488** (0.351)	1.610** (0.320)	0.338 (0.539)
Treatment direction				
<i>Positive</i>	0.013 (0.141)	0.128 (0.237)	0.097 (0.024)	0.085 (0.367)
Value attributes				
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	-0.607** (0.101)	-	-	-
Political attributes				
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	0.125 (0.053)	0.152 (0.105)	0.114 (0.083)	0.021 (0.130)
<i>Political Attention</i>	-0.046 (0.062)	-0.140 (0.116)	-0.002 (0.103)	0.003 (0.166)
Cut 1	-0.669 (0.450)	0.304 (0.652)	0.040 (0.572)	1.292 (0.894)
Cut 2	2.150 (0.452)	3.353 (0.674)	3.140 (0.590)	4.237 (1.002)
N	790	288	279	154
Chi-sq (df)	130.81** (7)	52.14** (6)	36.27** (6)	1.00 (6)
Pseudo R-sq	0.086	0.099	0.068	0.005

Entries are robust ordered logistic regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

As seen in Table 5.1, the egalitarian healthcare frame has a significant effect on individuals’ interest in egalitarian information. Since ordered logit coefficients are log odds ratios, these coefficients are not directly interpretable. However, the direction and significance of the

coefficients is key to understanding which variables matter in moving people away from or towards choosing egalitarian information. The effect of the egalitarian health care frame is indicated by the positive and significant coefficient for egalitarian treatment, which is 1.604, among all subjects (Column 1). These effects are also evident among those who score highest on the egalitarian value scale – for them, receiving the egalitarian frame has a significant effect on their preference for *more* egalitarian information, with a coefficient of 2.488 (in Column 2), with controls. However even among humanitarians, the egalitarian frame results in a greater propensity for selecting egalitarian information, with a coefficient of 1.610 (Column 3). This is strong support for the hypothesis that the *frames that emphasize equality, or egalitarianism, are the best frames to elicit individuals to seek out more of the same kind of information.* Interestingly, for egalitarian subjects, receiving *any* treatment frame increased their interest in egalitarian magazine *information*, suggesting the strength of egalitarian values. Humanitarian subjects, by contrast, are more likely to select egalitarian information if they receive either an egalitarian or a humanitarian frame. This is indicated by the positive and significant coefficients of 1.290 and 1.610 in Column 3, and demonstrates how malleable this value is among individuals who hold it.

Next, I again test hypothesis H5.1, which postulates that exposure to the egalitarian and individualist frames should, all things considered, result in a higher tendency to select information that “matches” the frame the individual has received. I again use ordered logit regression to show the differences in propensity to select information between treatment groups, including controls. This time I focus on the selection of individualist information, showing how each of the treatments increase or decrease the propensity to select the magazine cover stating, “Healthcare: Will it Discourage Public Responsibility for Americans?” I expect that those who

receive the individualist treatment should show the greatest propensity to select individualist information.

Table 5.2: ‘Selection of Individualist Healthcare Information by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model			
	All Subjects	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type				
<i>Individualism</i>	0.737** (0.263)	0.830 (0.725)	0.852** (0.360)	0.442 (0.418)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	0.207 (0.283)	1.256* (0.643)	-0.578 (0.429)	0.251 (0.463)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	0.366 (0.250)	-0.540 (0.926)	-0.252 (0.377)	1.759** (0.481)
Treatment direction				
<i>Positive</i>	-0.151 (0.181)	-1.076 (0.519)	0.318 (0.276)	-0.306 (0.309)
Value attributes				
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	1.34** (0.137)	-	-	-
Political attributes				
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	-0.272** (0.064)	-0.626** (0.144)	-0.286** (0.092)	-0.135 (0.102)
<i>Political Attention</i>	0.088 (0.078)	-0.626 (0.145)	0.098 (0.116)	0.104 (0.133)
Cut 1	3.284 (0.577)	1.001 (0.939)	0.581 (0.646)	-0.205 (0.667)
Cut 2	6.582 (0.626)	3.777 (1.133)	3.772 (0.687)	3.514 (0.744)
N	790	310	300	180
Chi-sq (df)	163.62** (7)	27.58** (6)	24.00** (6)	19.45** (6)
Pseudo R-sq	0.231	0.144	0.067	0.102

Entries are robust ordered logit regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

As Table 5.2 shows, receiving the individualist healthcare frame strongly and significantly increased propensity to select the individualist magazine cover, among the aggregated subjects (Column 1), and in the face of control variables. This is shown by the positive and significant coefficient for the individualist treatment (0.737, in Column 1). Since the model shows that value preferences of subjects are significant to understanding information choices, I further break down results by each of the value types. Among egalitarian subjects, the humanitarian frame has a positive and significant effect ($p \leq 0.10$) on the propensity to select *individualist* information regardless of frame direction, with a coefficient of 1.256 (Column 2). This interesting result may indicate a serious problem for Democrats trying to win over subjects with humanitarian language; by using a humanitarian frame that (as I show they did in the healthcare debate, in Chapter Two), they actually may have made those who would normally be interested in equality to start thinking about individualist information. And since individualism is not usually a value that supports governmental programs or reforms, receiving more information that emphasizes individual liberty would likely decrease support for liberal bills. While results in Chapter Three show that egalitarians were somewhat inoculated from the individualist healthcare frame, this propensity to seek out individualist information when hearing the humanitarian frame could be troubling to Democrats.

In Column 3, results of the treatment effects among humanitarians show that the individualist frame has a significant and positive effect (with a coefficient of 0.852) on these subjects selecting individualist information. This indicates that humanitarians can be very strongly affected by individualist messages – something I have also shown in Chapters Three and Four. Not only do they change their attitudes to come in line with the individualist frame and allow it to weaken their commitment to their values, but they also show a propensity to want to

consume more of the individualist message. As I point out in Chapter Four, humanitarians may be considered a key constituency that Democrats need to “win over” if they are to be politically successful in their reform attempts.

Next, I show the results of treatment effects on individualists themselves, in Column 4. For individualists, the egalitarian frame has strong and significant effects, indicated by the coefficient in Column 3 of 1.759. That is, individualist subjects who consume the egalitarian healthcare frame actually react by seeking out *more* individualist information, perhaps as a backlash to hearing a message in conflict with their own values. This kind of backlash does not appear among humanitarians, further indicating that *the value of humanitarianism does not engender the kind of value commitment, changes to support, or information preferences that “cherished values” do.*

I again test hypothesis H5.2, which posits that exposure to the humanitarian frame should, all things considered, result in *no increase in the propensity* to select information that “matches” the frame the individual has received. I use ordered logit regression to show the differences in propensity to select humanitarian information between treatment groups, including controls. I expect that those who receive the humanitarian treatment should show no change in their propensity to select humanitarian information.

Table 5.3: ‘Selection of Humanitarian Healthcare Information by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model			
	All Subjects	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type				
<i>Individualism</i>	-0.166 (0.222)	-0.708** (0.344)	0.655 (0.416)	-0.279 (0.549)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	-0.034 (0.225)	-0.548 (0.344)	0.491 (0.457)	-0.056 (0.482)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	-0.121 (0.221)	-0.760** (0.323)	0.540 (0.430)	0.442 (0.511)
Treatment direction				
<i>Positive</i>	0.153 (0.157)	0.035 (0.229)	0.594** (0.302)	0.022 (0.371)
Value attributes				
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	-0.649** (0.130)	-	-	-
Political attributes				
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	0.137** (0.065)	0.068 (0.116)	0.151 (0.109)	0.354** (0.129)
<i>Political Attention</i>	-0.072 (0.069)	-0.115 (0.119)	-0.038 (0.115)	-0.047 (0.159)
Cut 1	-0.123 (0.518)	-0.615 (0.638)	2.616 (0.633)	2.135 (0.896)
Cut 2	2.909 (0.583)	2.423 (0.730)	6.242 (0.861)	5.101 (1.055)
N	790	310	300	180
Chi-sq	42.60**	7.93	9.14	9.78
(df)	(7)	(6)	(6)	(6)
Pseudo R-sq	0.050	0.0156	0.025	0.054

Entries are ordered logit regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, section 2 for frame content and variables.

Results of the ordered logit regression in Table 5.3 show that for all subjects and value types, hearing the humanitarian message makes *no significant difference* on individuals’ propensity to select humanitarian news information. This is indicated by the lack of significant coefficients for the humanitarian treatment variable (*Humanitarianism*) in all columns. Since

value types are again shown to be significant in Column 1, I then break down results by the value of the individual. However it should be noted that none of the models that break down the results by value type are significant, as noted by the chi-squares and related degrees of freedom. However, they may lend us at least some indications about how subjects select humanitarian information. When egalitarians receive either the individualist or egalitarian frame, it is clear that they move away from selecting humanitarian information, indicated by the negative and significant coefficients of -0.708 and -0.760 respectively in Column 2. This relationship is also clear from the previous model in Table 5.1, which shows that egalitarians prefer egalitarian information when they receive any of the value frames.

Taken as a whole, these results show that humanitarian healthcare frames do not motivate *any* individuals to seek out more humanitarian information. This provides strong support for Hypothesis 5.2 (*H5.2*). Additionally, we see that the “cherished value” frames *do* motivate this kind of behavior, causing individuals to seek out *more of the same information they have just received*. This is support for Hypothesis 5.1 (*5.1*). While these results are strong in the face of controls such as party ID, political attentiveness, and direction of the frame, the effects still may be issue-dependent. That is, perhaps there is something particular about healthcare reform that invokes these changes in information choices. Next, I address this concern by evaluating the same hypotheses using affirmative action frames (n=210).

5.3.3 Effects of Affirmative Action Frames on Information Choices

I evaluate how the treatments affect information preferences in the affirmative action domain in Tables 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6. As with the healthcare condition, all models use the Control treatment condition as the reference group, and the number of times the control magazine was

selected (*cmag3*) as the base category in direct comparison. First, I again test hypothesis H5.1, which posits that exposure to the egalitarian and individualist frames should, all things considered, result in a higher propensity to select “matching” information. I use ordered logit regression to show the differences in propensity to select egalitarian information between treatment groups, including controls for partisanship, political attentiveness, and treatment direction³⁹. In Table 5.4 below, the dependent variable is *emag3*, which can take values reflecting zero, one, or two selections of the egalitarian magazine covers. As with the healthcare experiment, I expect that those who receive the egalitarian treatment should show the greatest propensity to select egalitarian information. That is, if an individual reads the egalitarian argument, he or she should be more likely to select the cover headline that asks, “Affirmative Action: Does it Equalize the Playing Field for Minorities?”⁴⁰

³⁹ Additional models that included a dummy variable recording whether the subject was white or another race were also included in the models, since this issue involves important racial components. However the variable never approaches significance in any of the models, perhaps because the sample was 79% white and included only 24 African Americans. ANOVA tests indicate that there were not significant differences in the effects of value frames on information preferences among racial groups, though the number of respondents in the tests quite small. Since the effects of the frames on information preferences do not change when non-white subjects are included, and because the n is already fairly small at 210, I include all subjects in all of the models, regardless of race.

⁴⁰ Screenshots of the magazine covers are available in Appendix C.

Table 5.4: ‘Selection of Egalitarian Affirmative Action Information by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model			
	All Subjects	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type				
<i>Individualism</i>	-0.269 (0.364)	1.141 (0.775)	-1.031* (0.065)	-0.406 (0.794)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	-0.371 (0.370)	-0.009 (0.518)	-0.713 (0.776)	-1.018 (0.856)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	0.515 (0.373)	0.494* (0.248)	0.094 (0.628)	-0.149 (0.791)
Treatment direction				
<i>Positive</i>	-0.182 (0.264)	-0.427 (0.102)	0.275 (0.432)	-0.754 (0.624)
Value attributes				
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	-0.532** (0.178)	-	-	-
Political attributes				
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	0.025 (0.102)	0.053 (0.185)	-0.061 (0.188)	-0.034 (0.175)
<i>Political Attention</i>	0.016 (0.105)	0.094 (0.171)	0.014 (0.183)	-0.216 (0.237)
Cut 1	-1.312 (0.705)	-0.175 (0.840)	-0.806 (1.226)	-1.367 (1.185)
Cut 2	2.759 (0.779)	4.317 (1.061)	3.036 (1.460)	2.485 (1.231)
N	250	103	92	55
Chi-sq (df)	15.03** (7)	12.86* (6)	6.36 (6)	3.80 (6)
R-sq	0.062	0.056	0.066	0.047

Entries are ordered logit regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, section 2 for frame content and variables.

As seen in Table 5.4, the egalitarian affirmative action frame reinforces the interest among egalitarians in receiving more egalitarian information. This is indicated by the positive and significant ($p \leq 0.10$) coefficient for egalitarian treatment, which is 0.494, among egalitarians

(Column 2). The model in Column 2 indicates support for the hypothesis that the *frames that emphasize equality, or egalitarianism, are the best frames to elicit individuals to seek out more of the same kind of information*, and is quite similar to the results seen in Table 5.1 with healthcare frames. Given the chi-square of 9.89 and with 6 degrees of freedom, this model is significant at the $p \leq 0.10$ level. However among humanitarians, the individualist frame has the only significant results, decreasing the propensity for selecting egalitarian information. This is indicated by the significant and negative coefficient of -0.288 (Column 3).

Next, I again test hypothesis H5.1, which also postulates that exposure to the individualist frames should, all things considered, result in a higher tendency to select individualist information. I again use ordered logit regression to show the differences in propensity to select information between treatment groups, including controls. This time I focus on the selection of individualist information, showing how each of the treatments increase or decrease the propensity to select the magazine cover stating, “Affirmative Action: Does it Help Minorities Help Themselves?” I expect that those who receive the individualist treatment should show the greatest propensity to select individualist information.

Table 5.5: ‘Selection of Individualist Affirmative Action Information by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model			
	All Subjects	Egalitarian Subjects	Humanitarian Subjects	Individualist Subjects
Treatment type				
<i>Individualism</i>	0.337** (0.041)	-0.370 (0.619)	0.491* (0.246)	0.491 (0.841)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	0.429 (0.408)	-0.373 (0.614)	0.643 (0.884)	0.643 (0.884)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	-0.093 (0.393)	-0.443 (0.649)	0.044 (0.795)	0.044 (0.795)
Treatment direction				
<i>Positive</i>	-0.141 (0.239)	-0.582 (0.460)	0.361 (0.444)	0.361 (0.444)
Value attributes				
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	0.600** (0.170)	-	-	-
Political attributes				
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	-0.036 (0.095)	-0.122 (0.189)	0.006 (0.107)	0.006 (0.160)
<i>Political Attention</i>	-0.007 (0.108)	-0.147 (0.193)	0.111 (0.186)	0.112 (0.186)
Cut 1	1.310 (0.718)	-0.603 (0.898)	0.698 (1.169)	0.698 (1.169)
Cut 2	4.374 (0.825)	2.015 (0.976)	3.841 (1.450)	3.842 (1.451)
N	250	103	92	55
Chi-sq (df)	15.72** (7)	5.09 (6)	3.03 (6)	3.03 (6)
R-sq	0.055	0.031	0.020	0.020

Entries are ordered logit regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

As Table 5.5 shows, receiving the individualist affirmative action frame significantly increased propensity to select the individualist magazine cover, among all subjects and in the face of control variables. This is shown by the positive coefficient for the individualist treatment (0.337) in Column 1. Since the model shows that value preferences of subjects are significant to

understanding information choices, I further break down results by each of the value types. Among egalitarians, none of the treatments result in an increased propensity to select individualist information. This may reflect that affirmative action, with its goal of leveling the economic and educational playing field for historically oppressed minorities, more explicitly invokes themes of equality – it may have the effect, then, of making egalitarians’ beliefs even more inoculated from individualist appeals.

Among humanitarians in Column 3, however, the evidence indicates that they are less inoculated from value frames. Those humanitarian subjects who receive an individualist message show a significantly greater propensity to select individualist information. This is indicated by the positive and significant coefficient of 0.491, with $p \leq 0.10$ in Column 3. This fits well with my argument in Chapter Four that humanitarians are simply more “up for grabs” than other value types. However, given the chi-sq of 5.09 with 6 degrees of freedom, this ordered logit regression does not reach significance. Therefore assumptions based on this model may be taken with a proverbial grain of salt.

Lastly, I evaluate how individualists react to treatment with the value frames, shown in Column 4. Somewhat similarly to their counterparts in the healthcare experiment (Table 5.2, Column 4), individualists who receive any of the affirmative action frames appear inoculated from any effects on their information preferences; that is, they react to hearing arguments by seeking out information *at the same rate as those who hear no value messages*. This lack of significant effects indicates that individualists, as Sniderman and Theriault 2004 (2004) say, “go home” to their underlying preferences.

Next, I again test hypothesis H5.2 in the affirmative action issue area, which posits that exposure to the humanitarian frame should, all things considered, result in *no increase in the*

propensity to select humanitarian information. I use ordered logit regression to show the differences in propensity to select humanitarian information between treatment groups, including controls. I expect that those who receive the humanitarian treatment should show no increase in their propensity to select the humanitarian cover which asks, “Affirmative Action: What Can It Do to Help Poor Minorities?” Results of these regressions are shown Table 5.6 below. Since the coefficient of the categorical variable indicating the individual’s value type (*Value - 3 category*) is not significant, I do not break down the results further by value type.

Table 5.6: ‘Selection of Humanitarian Information by Treatment Type, with Controls’

Explanatory Variables	Model
	All Subjects
Treatment type	
<i>Individualism</i>	0.160 (0.410)
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	0.237 (0.415)
<i>Egalitarian</i>	-0.142 (0.432)
Treatment direction	
<i>Positive</i>	0.152 (0.297)
Value attributes	
<i>Value - 3 category</i>	-0.109 (0.206)
Political attributes	
<i>Party ID - 5 category</i>	-0.023 (0.121)
<i>Political Attention</i>	0.139 (0.122)
Cut 1	1.502 (0.802)
Cut 2	4.276 (0.955)
N	250
Chi-sq	2.93
(df)	(7)
R-sq	0.008

Entries are order logit regression coefficients; standard errors in parentheses.
* $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$. Refer to Appendix B, Section 2 for frame content and variables.

Results of the ordered logit regression in Table 5.6 show some support for Hypothesis 5.2 (5.2), which posits that, unlike the “cherished value” frames, treatment with the humanitarian

frame should not have any significant effect on individuals' preferences for humanitarian information. In fact, none of the variables in the model result in a propensity to select the humanitarian magazine covers. This may indicate that people simply had little interest in humanitarian information, regardless of what treatment they received, or if they even received treatment. However, it could also be that opinions about affirmative action are so crystallized as to make movement on them challenging. Indeed, the very question of how stable the public's beliefs are on this topic is one of considerable past debate in the literature (see, for example, Batson, et al. 2002; Gamson and Modigliani 1987; Sears, et al. 2000; Steeh and Krysan 1996). For the purposes of this investigation, however, we see evidence here that challenges the assumptions of those like Feldman and Steenbergen (2001) and others, who argue that humanitarianism should be a strong motivating value for social welfare support and other social programs.

The results of the affirmative action experiment indicate similar patterns to those evident in the healthcare experiment – the humanitarian frame does not motivate its readers to seek out more information about humanitarianism. And, as I show in Chapter Three, this finding is *not* the result of the frame itself being poorly written or unbelievable – subjects rate the humanitarian affirmative action frame as just as persuadable and believable as the egalitarian and individualist frames. Taken as a whole, the results of the affirmative action experiment indicate that the patterns of information preference effects we see in the healthcare experiment are *not issue specific*.

In all, the results of the models in this chapter indicate that information preference can be manipulated by the use of strong, “cherished value” frames and is not simply the result of partisanship. “Cherished value” frames engender strong information preferences, even if those

preference choice serves to shield the subject from attempt to change his mind – in the face of a strong argument, egalitarians and individualists “go home” (e.g. Sniderman and Theriault 2004) and read an argument that matches their prior beliefs. By contrast, humanitarian subjects are more likely to be swayed by egalitarian and individualist appeals to seek out more of the same information. The humanitarian argument itself simply is not strong enough to engender changes in the kind of information a subject prefers.

Through two experiments and using over 1060 subjects, I have shown that, even as people report that humanitarianism undergirds their social spending beliefs (e.g. Feldman and Steenbergen 2001a, b), exposure to the humanitarian message does *not* cause significant increases in support for these kinds of bills. By contrast, egalitarian and individualist messages cause changes in *attitudes, value commitments, and information preferences* among all but the most inoculated individuals. I argue that this inoculation takes place because egalitarian and individualist beliefs are the key values in the American ethos that underpin every single major political argument in our country’s history (e.g. Bar-Tal 2000; McClosky and Zaller 1984c). These values are subject to the kind of constant conflict that forces people to elaborate more about their beliefs (e.g. McGuire 1962, 1964; McGuire and Papageorgis 1961; Petty, et al. 2002; Petty, et al. 1995b); that is, individuals have to evaluate the clash between individual liberty and equality and where they stand *far* more often than why an individual should be kind to deserving people.

Importantly, there appears to be a reinforcing mechanism among individualists and egalitarians that inoculates them from appeals that do not match their underlying values. Because of this reinforcing mechanism, individualists and egalitarians are likely to see information that is consistent with their extant values. This selective exposure then, in turn,

exposes them to *more* framing messages that reinforce their pre-existing value. I suggest that exposure to these messages may, over time, create a feedback loop of sorts, in which the individual hears confirmatory information, then seeks out even more confirmatory information – thus strengthening his extant beliefs (e.g. Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng 2011; Prior 2007; Slater 2007). This is all made possible by the high choice environment of today’s media, which allows individuals to actually choose to hear what they prefer (e.g. Barker 2002; Prior 2007; Stroud 2011). As Markus Prior explains in his (2007) book, “[w]hen choices abound, people do what they like best, so preferences drive exposure,” (27).

By contrast, humanitarians do not display this inoculation effect; by contrast, their preferences for information are as elastic as their commitment to their values and strength of attitudes towards policies. I have shown that they can be “won over” by the individualist and egalitarian messages in a way that those holding these relatively stronger “cherished values” cannot. This is another indication that, despite claims in the literature that humanitarianism is a strong value that explains support for social spending programs (e.g. Feldman and Steenbergen 2001b; Steenbergen 1996), it actually is a relatively *weaker* value, at least for those attempting to win support for new programs. Extrapolating from the results of analyses in Chapter 5, if humanitarians can be convinced by an egalitarian or individualist message to start seeking out news consistent with those messages, they may find themselves selectively exposing themselves to *more* egalitarian or individualist messages. This could create a strong feedback loop that changes their opinions long term about a host of related issues. On the other hand, expectations regarding this feedback loop could be overstated – as recent research has shown, individuals may select entertainment unless they absolutely cannot (e.g. Arceneaux and Johnson 2010; Arceneaux, et al. 2012; Smith, et al. 2008). However, I have shown that selective exposure

preferences *can* be manipulated through the use of a “strong” frame. So for those that *do* engage in selective exposure on any level, these choices appear to be linked to message exposure. Next, I discuss some of the implications of this finding, as well as the overarching finding that humanitarianism is *not* the strong, organizing value previously thought to undergird support for social programs.

6.0 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the dissertation, I have shown that humanitarianism, as a value, does not motivate people to support the kinds of reforms Democrats would like to pass. This is important *even if Democrats manage to pass bills* - unpopular reforms can be subject to threats of repeal, loss of political capital for their party supporters, and even could cause members of Congress to lose re-election attempts. Because humanitarianism is such a weak value frame, its use by Congressional leaders in the 2010 ACA debate may have doomed the bill to unpopularity from the start.

I show in Chapter One that humanitarianism is not part of the key American ethos, especially not in the way that the “cherished values” of egalitarianism and individualism are. I argue that this is because humanitarianism requires sustained empathy for others, and may prime feelings that others do not deserve help. In further research, I plan to directly test how these empathy primes can be influenced by racial cues, using experimental manipulations.

Next, in Chapter Two, I show through a content analysis that it was indeed the primary frame that Democrats used in the 2010 debate, whereas GOP leaders used the far stronger individualist frame when talking about the ACA. In Chapter Three, I present the results of two experiments on healthcare (n=810) and affirmative action (n=210). In the healthcare experiment, I show that the “cherished value” frames of individualism and egalitarianism result in significant changes in support levels healthcare in all but individualist subjects. However, the humanitarian frame does *not* have this effect on opinions towards either affirmative action or healthcare. In the case of healthcare, receiving the humanitarian frame actually has deleterious effects on support among key constituencies – Republicans and Democratic egalitarians and individualist

Independents. All of these groups *decrease* their support for healthcare reform when they receive the humanitarian frame.

Next, in Chapter Four, I show that those who hold the value of humanitarianism are also less committed to that value than their egalitarian and individualist counterparts. When humanitarian subjects receive an egalitarian or individualist frame, they display significantly weaker support for humanitarian values after exposure. By contrast, we see no such value change among egalitarians and individualists. I argue that this is because egalitarianism and individualism are the key complementary and clashing values of American society. This constant clash inoculates the belief holder from attempts to change his mind (e.g. Papageorgis and McGuire 1961; Petty, et al. 1995b). This shows that Democrats can successfully switch to egalitarian messages and capture support for their programs among humanitarians. Indeed, the *must* make such a switch, since humanitarians are so susceptible to the individualist argument that Republicans most often employ.

Lastly, Chapter Five shows that frame exposure can have pernicious downstream consequences on some individuals. For those holding the strong, “cherished values,” value appeal only serve to strengthen their desire to consume more information that confirms their beliefs. That is, for egalitarians, reading *any* frame causes them to seek out *more* egalitarian information. For individualists, the egalitarian frame motivates them to “go home” to their individualist preferences, seeking out more individualist information. But for humanitarians, receiving an humanitarian frame has no such effect. They have no such strong pull to “go home,” and therefore are left to twist in the wind, picking up value and information preferences from exposure to the other two frame types. I posit that strong frames of “cherished values” cause individuals (especially humanitarians) to – subconsciously or consciously – choose to

consume more information that is *consistent* with that strong frame message. Hearing a message one time might not, then, change someone's political identification or polarize them further (e.g. Prior 2013), but it *could* make their beliefs come further in line with the messages coming out of party leaders' mouths. This has important implications for understanding why communications using weak frames can be such destructive choices for political elites.

As I establish in Chapter Two, Democratic leaders in Congress heavily utilized humanitarian themes in their press releases about the ACA healthcare reform bill in 2010, also known as "Obamacare." Their Republican counterparts, on the other hand, used the core American "cherished value" of individualism when discussing their opposition to the bill. By using a frame that did not have the same power as "cherished values" to move attitudes, engender value commitment, or – as I argue in this chapter – winnow down one's preference for information to that which confirms the frame, *Democratic leaders using humanitarian language failed to use the best tool of persuasion at their disposal – the American commitment to equality.* And because hearing these frames can even affect the kind of information that an individual gravitates towards in the future, this choice to use a weaker value frame can have even stronger downstream effects. This preference for more of the stronger messages can reinforce beliefs among those who hold these inoculated beliefs. However, among those holding humanitarian beliefs, strong "cherished values" cause these individuals to "go home" with whoever has the strongest value appeal. Through their attempt to fight a message of "liberty for all" with a message of "kindness for those who deserve it," the Democrats may have destined the ACA to politically damaging controversy (and, at best, a lukewarm reception from even party loyalists) from the start.

This story stands in contrast with the assumption, made by researchers such as Feldman and Steenbergen (2001a, 2001b) and others, that humanitarianism is the great bridging value that can finally unite Democrats and Republicans in support of such things as healthcare reform. Far from bridging the gap, humanitarian appeals only serve to motivate revulsion *away* from reformers' goals, perhaps because they require such sustained empathy. This has important consequences for the Democratic Party. If they are to win over the hearts and minds of the American people and drum up support for their social spending and reform programs, they must invoke equality in their communications with the public. Next, I summarize some of the ways that leaders in the party have caught on to this dilemma, and how the most successful of them use this theme of equality. In addition, I make recommendations for future research, which I argue should address the way that the content of the frames themselves help ideas "stick" to an issue, and should do so with an eye towards explaining the entire media framing cycle.

6.1 CURRENT POLITICS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While working on this dissertation, a presidential election campaign raged on in the background, oblivious to the research I was collecting or the meaning of this research to elite strategic communication. Nonetheless, President Obama seemed to grasp the importance of fairness and the egalitarian frame. For example, in his September 6th speech to the Democratic National Convention, the President emphasized the fairness of his economic plans, stating that,

“My grandparents were given the chance to go to college, buy their own home, and fulfill the basic bargain at the heart of America's story: the promise that hard work will pay off; that responsibility will be rewarded; that everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules, from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, D.C.”

This commitment to fairness may have been one of the primary themes of the campaign, as both sides battled to paint the other as favoring one income class over the other. Mitt Romney's campaign specifically addressed the issue of egalitarianism in his communications with the public, stating in one speech that,

“This America is fundamentally fair...We will stop the unfairness of urban children being denied access to the good schools of their choice; we will stop the unfairness of politicians giving taxpayer money to their friends' businesses; we will stop the unfairness of requiring union workers to contribute to politicians not of their choosing; we will stop the unfairness of government workers getting better pay and benefits than the taxpayers they serve; and we will stop the unfairness of one generation passing larger and larger debts on to the next” (in Sarlin 2012; see also Ward 2012).

These dueling attempts to show themselves to be more committed to egalitarian principles even led Jonathan Haidt (in a profoundly insightful article featured in Time Magazine) to dub it the “New Culture War over Fairness” (Haidt 2012). What differed among the sides was *how* that egalitarian future should play out – should government take a back seat and encourage individuals to work on their own for success, or should the government right wrongs and provide a safety net for individuals who might not be getting a fair shake? While many factors go into why a Presidential election is won or lost, popularity differences between Mr. Obama and Mr. Romney (and the care with which the Romney campaign tried to sidestep comments about 47% of Americans being dependent on the government) suggest that Americans were not willing to cede the egalitarian high ground to the Republican Party.

Up-and-coming G.O.P. contenders, however, appear more and more committed to egalitarian principles of fairness and equality. Marco Rubio, a commonly suggested candidate for 2016, has suggested that the party must paint itself as committed to fairness on immigration and wealth issues if it is to compete in the future (Bell 2013; Moody 2013). What is key here is that both parties are arguing about some way to meld individualism – and its commitment to individual accomplishments outside of the government – and egalitarian fairness.

Notably absent from recent conversation is what role humanitarian empathy for the poor will play in the new American future. While I show that humanitarianism is not a motivating *policy* frame for the majority of Americans, the kind of empathy individuals show towards the deserving poor fills soup kitchens, charity baskets, and firemen’s boots all over the country. Surely something is motivating people to help others, even if this motivation does not seem to, as Feldman and Steenbergen (2001a) might argue, actually cause them to back specific *policy* goals. Future research would be well served to explore why these charitable and empathetic

impulses do not appear to translate to policy motivations. As I explain in Chapter One, I suspect that the relatively weaker ability of humanitarian empathy to engender policy support has something to do with in-group/out-group relationships in American society, especially racial stereotypes (e.g. Gilens 2000). I hope to continue examining these suspicions in my own experimental and observational research, and also hope to see others take up this interesting line of (perhaps understudied) work.

One area that is nowhere near danger of being understudied is framing in communication, which seems to inspire a new paper every few days. Even though this field is exploding in new and interesting work, I hope to see a focus on so-called “real world” framing effects as research moves forward. This project was an attempt to evaluate the act of framing a political issue from start to finish, using information about the actual framing communications of elected elites. In my future work and the work of others, I hope to see this kind of cradle-to-grave evaluation of policy arguments, to create a stronger typology of what “works” and what doesn’t.

APPENDIX A

A.1 MEASUREMENT AND SCALE ITEMS FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

A.1.1 Content analysis word list

600 humanitarian

Intercoder reliability = 89.8% similarity

- poor
- child*
- cannot afford
- disadvantage*
- need
- needy
- digni*
- welfare
- well-being
- less fortunate
- basic need
- help
- homeless*
- poverty*
- bankrupt*
- charit*
- afford*
- aging
- senior*
- suffer*
- helpless*
- relief
- deserve*
- unkind

- kind
- kindn*

601 egalitarianism

Intercoder reliability = 92.3% similarity

- fair*
- equal*
- redistrib*
- right
- all Americans
- just*
- everyone*
- difference*
- rich*
- have-nots
- haves
- everybod*

602 individualism

Intercoder reliability = 88.9% similarity

- taxes
- spending
- handout*
- for themselves
- bootstrap*
- requir*
- force*
- government takeover
- governmental takeover
- overreach*
- bureaucra*
- fraud*
- spend*
- takeover
- self
- burden*
- responsib*

603 process

Intercoder reliability = 79.6% similarity

- disgrac*
- promis*
- schem*
- deal
- payoff*
- kickback*
- vote*
- secret
- secrets
- secretive*
- open
- openness
- honest*
- transparen*
- sweetheart deal
- closed door
- negotiat*
- table
- backroom
- bipartisan*
- deliberat*
- momentum*
- fight*
- promot*
- process*
- debat*
- rule
- preced*
- agree*

APPENDIX B

B.1 VALUE PREFERENCE SCALES

B.1.1 Value Scale Questionnaire

Subjects answered a series of trade-off questions, designed to assign them a score from 0 to 2 on each of the values. Items 1, 3, and 5 were taken directly or adapted slightly from Feldman and Steenbergen (2001).

- *Egalitarianism vs. humanitarianism (reversed on second question)*

1. With which ONE statement do you agree the most?...This country should do more to equalize differences between the rich and poor OR This country should do more to help just those unable to provide for their basic needs.
2. With...If we would just focus on making wealth more equal in this country, we would have far fewer problems OR if we would just focus on helping those who are very poor in this country, we would have far fewer problems.
3. With...One of the biggest problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance OR if we would just focus on helping those who are very poor in this country, we would have far fewer problems.

- *Individualism vs. humanitarianism (reversed on second question)*

4. With...People who are unable to provide for their basic needs should help themselves OR People who are unable to provide for their basic needs should be helped by others.
5. With...If we would just focus on helping those who are very poor in this country, we would have far fewer problems OR if we would just focus on people doing more to help themselves, we would have far fewer problems.
6. With...One of the biggest problems in this country is that we do too much for people OR This country should do more to help just those unable to provide for their basic needs.

- *Egalitarianism vs. individualism (reversed on second question)*

7. With...This country should do more to equalize differences between the rich and poor OR This country should do more to make people help themselves.

8. With...One of the biggest problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance OR One of the biggest problems in this country is that we do too much for people.
9. With...If we would just focus on making wealth more equal in this country, we would have far fewer problems OR This country should do more to make people help themselves.

Subjects are passed on randomly to either the humanitarian, egalitarian, individualist, or control (no) frame condition, with scores compiled as an index for later analysis of their pre-existing value preferences.

B.2 VALUE TREATMENT AND CONTROL FRAMES

B.2.1 Frame language

The following pages show the exact language used in the frame vignettes for the healthcare and affirmative action experiments.

Table B.1: ‘Healthcare Frames’

Frame Type	Control	Egalitarian	Humanitarian	Individualistic
	As you may know, Congress passed healthcare reform in 2010. This year, many aspects of the law go into effect for the first time...			
Democrat/Pro	...One of the reasons many people supported the law was because it will help <i>make several changes to the kind of healthcare people get in this country</i> . As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>healthcare will change for some people and stay the same for others</i> .” In this way, the healthcare bill should <i>create many positive changes to healthcare in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people supported the law was because it will help <i>equalize differences in healthcare access between the rich and poor</i> . As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>everyone in this country has the same quality of healthcare that the rich do</i> .” In this way, the healthcare bill should <i>create a more level playing field between the rich and the poor in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people supported the law was because it will help <i>many of the very poorest Americans prevent poverty caused by healthcare expenses</i> . As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>poor people in this country who deserve help will be able to receive it</i> .” In this way, the healthcare bill <i>should help disadvantaged people in need in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people supported the law is because it <i>sets requirements for what insurance companies and individuals can do</i> . As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>other taxpayers don’t have to shoulder the burden of their care</i> .” In this way, the healthcare bill should <i>encourage personal responsibility for companies and individuals in America</i> .
Republican/Pro	...One of the reasons many people supported the law was because it will help <i>make several changes to the kind of healthcare people get in this country</i> . As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>healthcare will change for some people and stay the same for others</i> .” In this way, the healthcare bill should <i>create many positive changes to healthcare in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people supported the law was because it will help <i>equalize differences in healthcare access between the rich and poor</i> . As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>everyone in this country has the same quality of healthcare that the rich do</i> .” In this way, the healthcare bill should <i>create a more level playing field between the rich and the poor in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people supported the law was because it will help <i>many of the very poorest Americans prevent poverty caused by healthcare expenses</i> . As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>poor people in this country who deserve help will be able to receive it</i> .” In this way, the healthcare bill <i>should help disadvantaged people in need in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people supported the law is because it <i>sets requirements for what insurance companies and individuals can do</i> . As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>other taxpayers don’t have to shoulder the burden of their care</i> .” In this way, the healthcare bill should <i>encourage personal responsibility for companies and individuals in America</i> .

Frame Type	Control	Egalitarian	Humanitarian	Individualistic
	As you may know, Congress passed healthcare reform in 2010. This year, many aspects of the law go into effect for the first time...			
Democrat/Con	<p>...One of the reasons many people opposed the law was because it will help <i>make several changes to the kind of healthcare people get in this country</i>. As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>healthcare will change for some people and stay the same for others</i>.” In this way, the healthcare bill should create many negative changes to healthcare in America.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people opposed the law was because it will do little to help equalize differences in healthcare access between the rich and poor. As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act makes it <i>impossible for insurance companies to cover them without raising rates for everyone</i>.” In this way, the healthcare bill should create a less level playing field between the rich and the poor in America.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people opposed the law was because it will not help many of the very poorest Americans prevent poverty from healthcare costs. As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act <i>makes it impossible for insurance companies to cover them without raising rates, which hurts poor people the most</i>.” In this way, the healthcare bill should not help disadvantaged people in need in America.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people opposed the law is because it <i>sets requirements for what insurance companies and individuals can do</i>. As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>we are all burdened with more financial responsibility for other people’s healthcare</i>.” In this way, the healthcare bill should discourage personal responsibility for companies and individuals in America.</p>
Republican/Con	<p>...One of the reasons many people opposed the law was because it will help <i>make several changes to the kind of healthcare people get in this country</i>. As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>healthcare will change for some people and stay the same for others</i>.” In this way, the healthcare bill should create many negative changes to healthcare in America.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people opposed the law was because it will do little to help equalize differences in healthcare access between the rich and poor. As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act makes it <i>impossible for insurance companies to cover them without raising rates for everyone</i>.” In this way, the healthcare bill should create a less level playing field between the rich and the poor in America.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people opposed the law was because it will not help many of the very poorest Americans prevent poverty from healthcare costs. As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act <i>makes it impossible for insurance companies to cover them without raising rates, which hurts poor people the most</i>.” In this way, the healthcare bill should not help disadvantaged people in need in America.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people opposed the law is because it <i>sets requirements for what insurance companies and individuals can do</i>. As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that healthcare insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, the act helps make certain that <i>we are all burdened with more financial responsibility for other people’s healthcare</i>.” In this way, the healthcare bill should discourage personal responsibility for companies and individuals in America.</p>

Table B.2: ‘Affirmative Action Frames’

Frame Type	Control	Egalitarian	Humanitarian	Individualistic
As you may know, each year many colleges use affirmative action policies in deciding which students to admit...				
Democrat/Pro	...One of the reasons many people support affirmative action is because it will help <i>make several changes to the kind of education people get in this country</i> . As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain that <i>education will change for some people and stay the same for others</i> .” In this way, affirmative action policies <i>create many positive changes to education in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people support affirmative action is because it will help <i>promote economic equality for minorities through education</i> . As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain that <i>minorities get an equal chance</i> .” In this way, affirmative action policies <i>create a more equal playing field in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people support affirmative action is because it will help <i>give poor minorities the chances they need</i> . As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain that <i>poverty’s effects aren’t felt by another generation of minorities</i> .” In this way, affirmative action policies <i>help poor minorities get an education in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people support affirmative action is because it will help <i>minorities take responsibility for their education so that they can help improve themselves</i> . As one Democrat in Congress explained, “By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain that <i>minorities are responsible for helping themselves</i> .” In this way, affirmative action policies <i>foster self-reliance in America</i> .
Republican/Pro	...One of the reasons many people support affirmative action is because it will help <i>make several changes to the kind of education people get in this country</i> . As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain that <i>education will change for some people and stay the same for others</i> .” In this way, affirmative action policies <i>create many positive changes to education in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people support affirmative action is because it will help <i>promote economic equality for minorities through education</i> . As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain that <i>minorities get an equal chance</i> .” In this way, affirmative action policies <i>create a more equal playing field in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people support affirmative action is because it will help <i>give poor minorities the chances they need</i> . As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain that <i>poverty’s effects aren’t felt by another generation of minorities</i> .” In this way, affirmative action policies <i>help poor minorities get an education in America</i>.	...One of the reasons many people support affirmative action is because it will help <i>minorities take responsibility for their education so that they can help improve themselves</i> . As one Republican in Congress explained, “By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain that <i>minorities are responsible for helping themselves</i> .” In this way, affirmative action policies <i>foster self-reliance in America</i> .

Frame Type	Control	Egalitarian	Humanitarian	Individualistic
As you may know, each year many colleges use affirmative action policies in deciding which students to admit...				
Democrat/Con	<p>...One of the reasons many people oppose affirmative action is because it will help <i>make several changes to the kind of education people get in this country</i>. As one Democrat in Congress explained, "By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain <i>that education will change for some people and stay the same for others</i>." In this way, affirmative action policies <i>create many negative changes to education in America</i>.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people oppose affirmative action is because it does little to help <i>promote economic equality for minorities through education</i>. As one Democrat in Congress explained, "By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain <i>that only college-bound minorities are given a chance while other minorities are unfairly passed over</i>." In this way, affirmative action policies do not help <i>create a more equal playing field in America</i>.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people oppose affirmative action is because it will not help <i>give poor minorities the chances they need</i>. As one Democrat in Congress explained, "By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain <i>that only college-bound minorities are given a chance while other, more needy minorities are being ignored</i>." In this way, affirmative action policies do not <i>help poor minorities get an education in America</i>.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people oppose affirmative action is because it will not help <i>minorities take responsibility for their education so that they can help improve themselves</i>. As one Democrat in Congress explained, "By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain <i>that minorities are never going to be responsible for helping themselves</i>." In this way, affirmative action policies <i>foster self-reliance in America</i>.</p>
Republican/Con	<p>...One of the reasons many people oppose affirmative action is because it will help <i>make several changes to the kind of education people get in this country</i>. As one Democrat in Congress explained, "By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain <i>that education will change for some people and stay the same for others</i>." In this way, affirmative action policies <i>create many negative changes to education in America</i>.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people oppose affirmative action is because it does little to help <i>promote economic equality for minorities through education</i>. As one Republican in Congress explained, "By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain <i>that only college-bound minorities are given a chance while other minorities are unfairly passed over</i>." In this way, affirmative action policies do not help <i>create a more equal playing field in America</i>.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people oppose affirmative action is because it will not help <i>give poor minorities the chances they need</i>. As one Republican in Congress explained, "By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain <i>that only college-bound minorities are given a chance while other, more needy minorities are being ignored</i>." In this way, affirmative action policies do not <i>help poor minorities get an education in America</i>.</p>	<p>...One of the reasons many people oppose affirmative action is because it will not help <i>minorities take responsibility for their education so that they can help improve themselves</i>. As one Republican in Congress explained, "By ensuring that race is a consideration in admission decisions, the act helps make certain <i>that minorities are never going to be responsible for helping themselves</i>." In this way, affirmative action policies <i>foster self-reliance in America</i>.</p>

APPENDIX C

C.1 INFORMATION SEARCH MATERIALS

C.1.1 Headline Text

A professional digital artist created appropriate mock-ups in order to ensure the subject perceived the magazine cover as realistic. Choices were randomly rotated, in order to ensure subjects did not select covers based on placement on the screen.

Egalitarian

Healthcare Reform: Will it equalize differences between rich and poor in America?

Affirmative Action: Does it equalize the playing field for minorities?

Individualism

Healthcare Reform: Will it discourage personal responsibility for Americans?

Affirmative Action: Does it help minorities help themselves?

Humanitarian

Healthcare Reform: Will it help disadvantaged people in America?

Affirmative Action: What can it do to help poor minorities?

No frame

Healthcare Reform: What changes will it make for healthcare in America?

Affirmative Action: What does it do for minorities?

C.1.2.1 Magazine Cover Images

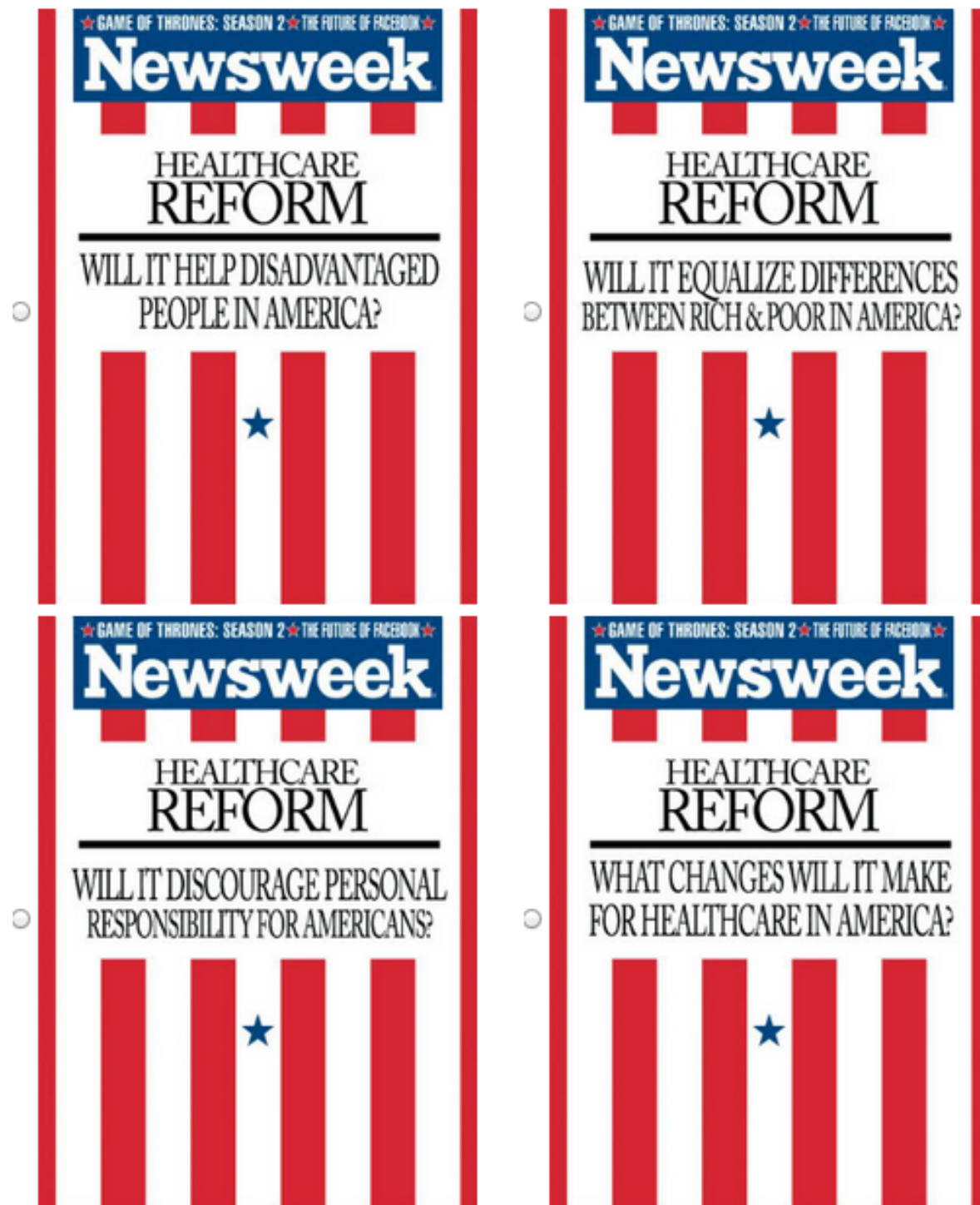


Figure C.1.1: 'Healthcare Reform Magazine Covers for Information Search'



Figure C.1.2: 'Affirmative Action Magazine Covers for Information Search'

APPENDIX D

D.1 PRESS RELEASES AND LIST OF CONGRESSIONAL ELITE

D.1.1 Members of Congress and Leadership

As the focus of this study was attempts by the party to steer communications in certain directions, elite status was defined as being a Member of Congress who was also part of official leadership in the 111th Congress (2009-2010). During that session of Congress, the ACA was under debate, therefore any press releases were considered for inclusion from the time the bill was introduced (as the “Service Members Home Ownership Tax Act of 2009,” H.R. 3590 in September of 2009) to one month *after* its signature into law by the President (as the “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act” in March of 2010). Most press releases obtained were released between its debate in the House in October of 2009 till its passage through House agreement to Senate amendment in March of 2010. A list of all of the Congressional leaders, as well as whether and how many press releases were obtained, is listed in Table D.1 below.

Appendix Table D.1: 'Leadership of the 111th Congress and Press Release Availability'

Leader Name	Chamber	Affiliation	Press Releases Obtained	N
Pelosi	House	D-CA	Yes	22
Hoyer	House	D-MD	Yes	13
Boehner	House	R-OH	Yes	48
Clyburn	House	D-SC	Yes	2
Cantor	House	R-VA	No	-
Larson	House	D-CT	Yes	7
Pence	House	R-IN	Yes	20
Becerra	House	D-CA	Yes	3
McCotter	House	R-MI	No	-
Biden	Senate	VP	No	-
Byrd	Senate	D-WV	Yes	0
Reid	Senate	D-NV	No	-
McConnell	Senate	R-KY	Yes	27
Durbin	Senate	D-IL	Yes	5
Kyl	Senate	R-AZ	No	-
Schumer	Senate	D-NY	No	-
Alexander	Senate	R-TN	Yes	15
Murray	Senate	D-WA	Yes	8
Thune	Senate	R-SD	Yes	2
Dorgan	Senate	D-ND	Yes	2
Ensign	Senate	R-NV	Yes	13
Menendez	Senate	D-NJ	Yes	1
Cornyn	Senate	R-TX	Yes	20

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